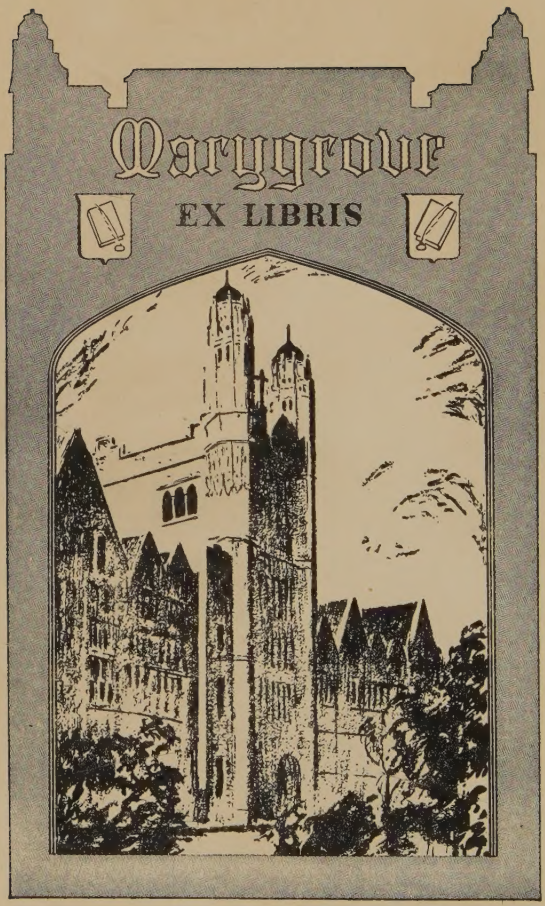
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JOHN KEATS

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# JOHN KEATS

BY

AMY LOWELL

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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TO

A. D. R.

THIS, AND ALL MY BOOKS

A. L.

## NOTE

In this one-volume edition the illustrations referred to in the Preface and in the Index are omitted

# PREFACE

To add another to the long list of books on Keats seems to demand, if not an excuse, at least an explanation. My reasons for undertaking what at first sight appears an act of supererogation have a certain cogency, however, and this cogency lies in the unexpected wealth of new material existing uncharted and almost unexplored in the libraries of American collectors. America has always been greatly interested in Keats, and from the very beginning American enthusiasts have been indefatigable in their efforts to obtain manuscripts, letters, books owned by Keats, anything, in short, which touched even remotely on the brief life history of the poet. For years I had been one of this band of collectors, but I scarcely knew how successful my quest had been until, in 1921, I was asked to deliver a commemorative address on the one hundredth anniversary of Keats's death at Yale University, as one of the lectures of the Francis Bergen Foundation. In preparing that address, I discovered so much that was fresh and unknown, so many little collateral facts of importance, that only a tithe of the information so gained could find place in the limits of an hour's talk. Realizing that, if my own collection could yield so much, the collections of others must also contain a great deal of which biographers and commentators were unaware, I decided that there was room for a new biography which should incorporate all the available material and make it accessible to students of Keats.

My intention in writing this book has been by no means to supplant existing biographies, but to add to them, and this I hope will be clearly understood. I should not have attempted a complete biography had it been possible to present all that I have discovered in any other way, but

the knowledge gained, spread as it is over the whole of Keats's life, could be properly understood only by placing it in a chronological pattern.

This was my chief reason for writing the book; there was, however, another. It lay simply in the passage of time. Many as are the books on Keats, their authors have belonged, I think without exception, to the nineteenth century, in attitude if not in fact. But a new generation of poets and critics now holds the stage, and the twentieth century has been silent in regard to Keats. Yet a great poet has something to give to every generation, and it has seemed to me time that mine should set down its impressions and put its particular view on record. I do not pretend to speak as the universal voice of an era, merely as one voice existing in that era; but this opinion has led me to add a certain amount of criticism to the biography proper, which criticism will be considered sympathetic or the reverse principally, I believe, according to whether the individual reader derive his impressions from the mental impulses of the last century or of this.

Before going any farther, I wish to make an apology. In July, 1914, I met Sir Sidney Colvin, then preparing his great book on Keats, in London. I told him that I possessed a good deal of Keats material, and promised, at his desire, to send him a list of it. But before my return to America, the war broke out, and shortly after, I fell seriously ill. These two facts made it impossible for me to keep my promise immediately, and before I was able to do so, his biography appeared. At the time, I had no intention of writing on Keats myself, and was deeply chagrined to discover that it was too late to send the list. I can only say that Sir Sidney Colvin has most graciously forgiven me, and granted me his permission to quote freely from his book. My indebtedness to him will be found recorded again and again throughout these two volumes.

Keats and his poetry are so much of a piece, that I have

followed a rather unusual method in dealing with the two aspects of his character, the personal and the poetic. I have given his life as a whole, bringing in the poems at intervals as they occurred to him. My object has been to make the reader feel as though he were living with Keats, subject to the same influences that surrounded him, moving in his circle, watching the advent of poems as from day to day they sprang into being. I have tried to bring back into existence the place, the time, and the society in which Keats moved. A host of commentators have dealt with him solely in his quality of poet functioning in the timeless area of universal literature; my endeavour has been to show him as a particular poet, hindered and assisted by his temperamental bias as a man, writing in a certain *milieu*. For this reason, I have considered that no detail which could add vividness to the picture is unimportant, nothing which could clarify his psychological processes too slight to be mentioned. Keats's life was so short that it is possible to follow it with a minuteness which could not be accorded to a poet who had lived the usual span of man's existence.

I have quoted freely, both from published and hitherto unpublished sources, convinced that first-hand evidence is always preferable to a hundred-year-after paraphrase. And I have spared no space to make clear my reasons for any altered date or departure from an accepted point of view. The sources for the quotations will be found at the bottom of the pages, and being there, I have not thought it necessary to give any farther catalogue of the books consulted. In the quotations, words in parentheses were in the original manuscripts, words in brackets have been added by me or by previous commentators. In quoting poems published in Keats's lifetime, I have followed the texts of the first editions. For those poems published after his death, I have followed the manuscripts wherever such were obtainable; where manuscripts were non-existent or inac-

cessible, I have taken Mr. Buxton Forman's readings in his Complete Edition. In the case of poems recently discovered, I have adopted Professor de Sélincourt's text. All letters and manuscripts are quoted exactly as they were written. I have altered neither spelling nor punctuation, and have let even abbreviations stand. In three Appendices I have given a chronological list of Keats's poems compiled with reference to the most recent discoveries; an unknown fragment of a poetical play in the Morgan Library; and various underscored passages and annotations found in books owned by Keats and never before published.[1]

As I have already said, my work has been principally among American collections, as I believed that the material in England had been exhaustively gone over by previous students, but I have examined both the Dilke Collection at Hampstead and that in the British Museum. Lord Crewe's collection I have not seen nor made any attempt to see, knowing it to have been thoroughly tabulated and made use of by the late H. Buxton Forman and Sir Sidney Colvin. The debt owed to these two gentlemen by all students of Keats is incalculable. Nothing can be done to-day without constant reference to their works. In the case of Mr. Buxton Forman, I have used chiefly his Complete Edition, in five small volumes, published in 1900–1, augmenting it with his earlier Library Edition, which though fuller in detail lacks the later information of the small edition. Whenever possible I have gone to the original sources quoted by him or Sir Sidney Colvin.

Professor de Sélincourt's editions of Keats's poems, particularly the Fourth Edition, have been invaluable, and to his courtesy I owe the permission to quote from them. It is a pleasure to record my thanks for his kindness and encouragement.

It has been my good fortune to run across a number of letters of Fanny Brawne's, quite unknown to students. I

[1] A fourth Appendix contains material which arrived too late to be mentioned above.

have been allowed to quote these in excerpts only, but indeed to give them in full would require an entire volume. To me, they make Fanny Brawne for the first time plausible; we see her at last as she was, not as egregious and erroneous legend has hitherto depicted her. To have been able, through these letters, to raise the cloud of malign misconstructions which has long obscured her, has been one of the chief satisfactions of my researches.

The list of my indebtedness to my brother collectors, and to many other people who have helped me by information or otherwise, is long, for I have met with the utmost cordiality on every side. First and foremost come the owners or custodians of the great collections. To Mr. J. P. Morgan of New York, owner of the Morgan Library, which he has just formally put at the service of students, but which has in fact always been at their service, assisted by the expert advice of its remarkable librarian, Miss Belle da Costa Greene, I am deeply obliged. Through Miss Greene's kindness I have had free access to the Library for the past four years, and have been permitted to make such transcripts of manuscripts as I needed. Mr. F. Holland Day of Norwood, Mass., has given me copies of three unpublished letters of Keats and various letters of his friends, as well as many photographs and pictures, among them a most interesting pencil drawing of Keats from a note-book of his brother Tom's. Mr. Day has also greatly aided me with his advice and detailed knowledge of Keats's life, and supplied me with newspaper clippings and magazine articles difficult to find. His unique collection of Keats presentation copies has added some valuable bits to my biographical data. Mr. Louis A. Holman of Boston, an indefatigable collector of Keatsiana, and the owner of the largest collection of prints and illustrations relating to Keats in the world, has opened his entire store to me. His note-books, the result of infinite labour, have been of the greatest service. Mr. Frank B. Bemis of Boston has also offered me every facility in his power, to him I owe

a most important letter from Tom Keats, and the inscriptions in some of his presentation copies of Keats's books have been particularly significant. Mr. William A. White of Brooklyn has been most kind. Through him I have had access to a manuscript of *Lamia*[1] as well as the proof-sheets of that poem, and his courtesy has enabled me to find and recognize one of the only two first editions of Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe* known to exist, which is now in his possession. The Keats Memorial Association of Hampstead, England, through its most courteous secretary, Mr. William E. Doubleday, placed the Dilke Collection at my unreserved disposal, and Mr. Doubleday personally undertook to obtain for me various permissions from people in England for which I am profoundly grateful. In the notes, these large collections are referred to as Morgan Collection, Day Collection, Dilke Collection, etc.

For the owners of one or more items, my thanks are due to Mr. Lucius Wilmerding of New York, for permission to quote the annotations in a copy of *Palmerin of England*; to Mr. William M. Elkins of Philadelphia, for allowing me to examine a copy of Keats's *Poems* formerly owned by Thomas Richards; to Mr. James Freeman Clarke of Boston, for permission to transcribe one of Keats's Scotch letters given by George Keats to his grandfather; to Mr. W. van R. Whitall of Pelham Manor, New York, for sending me Woodhouse's copy of *Endymion* for examination and transcription and for a photograph of an oil portrait of Woodhouse belonging to him; to Professor Edward S. Burgess of Hunter College, for an unpublished letter of George Keats, and for his transcription of Keats's notes written by Marianne Reynolds into a copy of *Paradise Lost* from the copy given by Keats to Mrs. Dilke now in the Dilke Collection; to Mr. A. Edward Newton of Philadelphia, for permission to reproduce a silhouette of Keats as a boy; to the National Portrait Gallery, London, for permission to reproduce a pencil drawing of Keats by Brown; to Mrs.

[1] Now in the Bemis Collection.

Herbert L. Wild, grand-daughter of Joseph Severn, for the reproduction of a silhouette of Keats; to Miss Fanny Speed MacDonald, great grand-daughter of George Keats, for a photograph of an engraving of a water colour sketch of Tom Keats by Joseph Severn; to Mr. Oliver R. Barrett of Chicago, for photographs of Keats's passport in his possession; to Dr. Roderick Terry of Newport, Rhode Island, for allowing me to quote the poem *Hither, hither, love*, the manuscript of which is owned by him; to Mrs. Roland Gage Hopkins of Brookline, Mass., for two unpublished letters of Keats; to Mr. Rosewell Page of Richmond, for transcribing the title-page and inscription of a Greek Testament which belonged to Keats now in his possession; to the Authors' Club of New York, for allowing me to transcribe Keats's annotations in a copy of *Guzman de Alfarache*.

Other people who have helped me in various ways are: Mrs. Samuel A. Hartwell, a grand-daughter of George Keats, by giving me much information about the Keats family in America, and compiling for me a genealogy of George Keats's descendants; Mrs. Thomas Hardy, by sending me information about the Keats family in Dorsetshire; Dr. John B. Hawes 2nd, by examining a health history of Keats which I made out for him and permitting me to quote his opinion upon it; Dr. Abner Post, by also examining the health history and allowing me to quote the result of his investigations; the Rev. Dr. Leigh H. Nixon, Librarian of the Westminster Cathedral Library, by sending me information in regard to a copy of Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe* in that Library; Mr. Gardner Teall, by telling me of the whereabouts of Keats's copy of *Guzman de Alfarache*; Mr. Claude L. Finney of the University of Michigan, by according me permission to quote from his unpublished thesis, *Shakespeare and Keats*, in the Widener Library, Harvard University; Professor Ralph Leslie Rusk of the University of Indiana, by giving me leave to quote one of Keats's Scotch letters discovered by

him in an old copy of the *Western Messenger* which he reprinted in the *North American Review*, and Miss Elisabeth Cutting, the editor of that magazine, by adding her necessary permission to his; Mr. S. Foster Damon, by making for me a list of the derivations of the alchemical and astrological allusions in Keats's *Cap and Bells*; and Miss Margaret Shepard, by allowing me to reproduce a photograph taken by her of the Piazza di Spagna, Rome.

To my friend, Professor John Livingston Lowes of Harvard, I owe so much that it is impossible to tabulate the sum of my indebtedness. His enthusiasm, encouragement, and sympathy during the entire time that I have been at work on the book have been unfailing. To his knowledge and imaginative insight I owe many suggestions as to the possible sources of some of the poems, which suggestions I have followed up with most fruitful results.

To Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale is due the initial impulse which led me to undertake the book, for it was he who invited me to deliver the anniversary address at New Haven. I hereby express my thanks.

Others whose assistance I cannot leave unrecorded are Dr. Theodore J. Eastman, who has given me much advice on the medical aspects of Keats's life; Dr. George Watson Cole, librarian of the Henry E. Huntington library at Pasadena, who, together with his assistant, Mr. Cecil K. Edmonds, set me on the track which led to the discovery of a copy of Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe* in a place where Keats might have seen it; Professor John R. Slater of the University of Rochester, who examined for me a presentation copy of Keats's *Endymion* formerly in the possession of Mrs. Bertha L. Bolton of that city; my niece, Mrs. Orme B. Clarke of London, who obtained for me a copy of the entry of the marriage of Keats's parents in the Register Book of Marriages of Saint George's Church, Hanover Square, and the Rev. Prebendary Thicknesse who made the copy.

For transcriptions of letters and poems which I have been unable to use, I wish to thank the well-known booksellers, Mr. Gabriel Wells, and Mr. Edgar H. Wells, both of New York, Mr. Charles Sessler of Philadelphia, and Mr. John Howell of San Francisco; also Mr. Jerome Kern of New York.

Mr. Charles K. Bolton, librarian of the Boston Athenæum, Mr. William C. Lane, librarian of the Harvard College Library, and Mr. Walter B. Briggs, assistant librarian of the Harvard College Library, have afforded me very material assistance in many ways for which I am most grateful.

I cannot close this list without mentioning my secretaries, Mrs. Charles W. Alexander and Mrs. Willis C. Carling, whose unwearying labours have so materially lightened mine. By their devotion, complete indifference to the passage of time, and enthusiastic eagerness, a long and difficult task has been made almost easy and brought to a conclusion in a surprisingly short time.

If I have forgotten any one I should have remembered, I shall be very sorry; but I beg all such persons, if any there be, to pardon the oversight as one of the head not of the heart.

Amy Lowell.

Brookline, Mass.
*October* 10, 1924.

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# JOHN KEATS

VOLUME I

# JOHN KEATS

## CHAPTER I

### FROM BOY TO MAN

THE leaves were turning brown, and fluttering down in companies to be scuffled carelessly underfoot by passers-by in the squares, and parks, and graveyards — anywhere, in fact, where there were leaves to turn brown and fall. In the West End of London, shuttered houses gazed blankly at empty streets, except when caretakers flung open their wide doors and revealed glimpses of darkened halls echoing with emptiness. Drawing-rooms slumbered, swathed in cambric coverings. Rats scuttled unmolested across the floors of deserted stables. Footman's knock and postman's bell were events of rare occurrence. The West End, or rather that important part of it composed of strictly human elements, was scattered all over Great Britain: it cultivated its magnificent gardens in every shire in England; it killed exuberantly, bagging birds and beasts with unabatable ardour from Scotland to Land's End; it sipped and bathed and attended routs and concerts at Bath; or, if it happened to be in the Prince of Wales's set, briefly sojourned in the wake of that fantastic gentleman whither fancy led him, which on this particular Autumn, having just broken with Mrs. Fitzherbert, was not Brighton. But, whatever its temper, as it bumped and rolled in its own carriages toward its chosen destinations, the sight of broad fields and finely timbered parks caused it to thank its stars with fervour that the English channel

separated it from France, still in the clutches of the Reign of Terror. Wherever the world of fashion might have betaken itself, it had betaken itself somewhere. The West End was deserted, and nowhere was its desertion more noticeable than it was of a Sunday in its favourite church, Saint George's, Hanover Square.

But although the meagre congregation which gathered for its Sunday services could not boast a single denizen of the quarter, it was still, in the eyes of the parishioners of less favoured edifices, the most desirable church in all London to be married in. It was not uncommon for aspirants to matrimony from other parishes to hire rooms within the area of its jurisdiction and deposit bags or wearing apparel in them in order that its hallowed influence might shed its blessing on their marriage vows. This was snobbish, no doubt, but it also showed a praiseworthy desire to rise in the world, and was probably the reason, and very likely the method of procedure, which induced two young persons who lived in Finsbury to be married there. These persons were Frances Jennings, daughter of John Jennings, a livery-stable keeper at the sign of the Swan and Hoop, Finsbury Pavement, Moorfields, and her father's trusted head ostler, Thomas Keats. So they appeared to themselves; to us, they appear uniquely as the future father and mother of John Keats.

If the choice of Saint George's as the scene of the wedding ceremony was for any other reason than that I have stated, I do not know what it was; unless, indeed, the marriage were in the nature of a runaway match owing to some objection on the part of the bride's parents, whose own notions of rising in the world may have taken another direction, but their evident sense of the probity of Thomas Keats, which as events prove was great, does not seem to point in this direction. However that may be, the marriage took place at Saint George's on Thursday, October ninth, 1794.

The register of the church reads as follows:

*Thomas Keats and Frances Jennings*

Both of this Parish, were married in this Church by *Banns* this *Ninth* day of *October* in the year *1794*.

By me, *J. Downes, Curate.*

This marriage was solemnized between us { *Thomas Keats.* / *Frances Jennings.*

In the presence of { *John Brough* / *Mary Sut*

Who John Brough and Mary Sut were, no one knows. They appear and disappear with their signatures. Their presence, and the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Jennings, gives some colour to the disapproval theory, but subsequent occurrences do not seem to bear it out. At any rate, the young couple returned to the Swan and Hoop, and there, one year later, their first son, John Keats, was born.

There is some doubt as to whether October twenty-ninth or October thirty-first was his birthday. Everyone connected with Keats seems to have believed that he was born on October twenty-ninth, but in the baptismal register at St. Botolph's Church, Bishopsgate, where he was christened on December eighteenth, 1795, is a marginal note, said to be in the handwriting of the rector, Dr. Conybeare, stating that he was born on October thirty-first. This appears to me the flimsiest evidence, as the rector could know nothing of the matter except what he was told and may very possibly have mistaken what was said.

Keats is supposed to have been a seven months child, but he seems to have suffered from none of the disabilities which usually hamper such children. For sixteen months, John remained the only child; but on February twenty-eighth, 1797, another son, George, was born; and on November eighteenth, 1799, still another, who was named Thomas after his father. Since these two brothers play a very large part in Keats's life, it is important to remember

their relative ages. A fourth son, Edward, born in 1801, died in infancy, and the only girl, Frances Mary, did not arrive upon the scene until June, 1803.

Of Keats's ancestry, we know next to nothing. The name is a fairly common one in England under various spellings, but all attempts hitherto made through baptismal registers, etc., to trace the origin of Thomas Keats, John's father, have failed. Sir Sidney Colvin says that, according to his information, Thomas Keats was born in 1768, but as he does not reveal the source from which he obtains this fact, we are almost as much in the dark as ever. The most plausible suggestion is that communicated by Mr. Thomas Hardy to Sir Sidney Colvin, and again mentioned in a letter to me from Mrs. Hardy. Mrs. Hardy's letter is a little fuller in detail than Sir Sidney's account, and the detail gives the matter a more likely possibility. Mrs. Hardy says that in her husband's youth "there was a family named Keats living two or three miles from here [Dorchester], who, Mr. Hardy was told by his father, was a branch of the family of the name living in the direction of Lulworth, where John Keats is assumed to have landed on his way to Rome (it being the only spot on this coast answering to the description). They kept horses, being what is called 'hauliers,' and did also a little farming. They were in feature singularly like the poet, and were quick-tempered as he is said to have been, one of them being nicknamed 'light-a-fire' on that account. All this is very vague, and may mean nothing, the only arresting point in it considering that they were of the same name, being the facial likeness, which my husband says was very strong. He knew two or three of these Keatses." An additional weight given to this suggestion is Severn's remark that, when he and Keats visited the spot identified as Lulworth in one of the many irritating delays to which wind-driven vessels were so often subjected and which tormented the passengers on the "Maria Crowther" for two

weeks after sailing from Gravesend, Keats "was in a part that he already knew." We are not aware that Keats was ever in the neighbourhood, for Sir Sidney's idea that he may have broken the homeward journey from Teignmouth at Dorchester, and visited Lulworth Cove then, breaks down in face of an unpublished letter from Tom Keats that I shall quote in due course, in which he says that after leaving Bridport "we travelled a hundred miles in the last two days." This certainly leaves no time for sight-seeing, so that, if Severn be correct in thinking that Keats was familiar with the Lulworth "caves and grottoes," his familiarity must date from a boyhood visit of which we have no record, made perhaps while staying with relations. This is all mere guess-work, of course, but it is the nearest we can approach to a genealogy of the Keats family. Against this, is the statement of Señora Llanos (Fanny Keats) that she remembered hearing as a child that her father came from Cornwall, near Land's End. Again Sir Sidney is my authority, but again he neglects to mention his; so whether Señora Llanos's recollection is down in black and white somewhere, or is merely the product of hearsay remembrance on some one's part, we cannot tell.

The origin of Keats's maternal grandfather is equally to seek. There is an entry of a marriage between a John Jennings and a Catherine Keate at Penryn, Cornwall, in 1770, and Sir Sidney Colvin conjectures that this entry may point to the fact of Jennings and his head man, Thomas Keats, being relatives; but Jennings is a usual patronymic enough in that part of Great Britain, and John is a name of no use at all for purposes of identification wherever English is spoken. What explodes Sir Sidney's conjecture into thin air, however, is the recently discovered knowledge that Mrs. Jennings was a Yorkshire woman.[1] The present Keats family believe that Mr. Jennings was more than an ordinary livery-stable keeper. One of the granddaughters

[1] Abbey Memoir in Author's Collection.

of George Keats remembers her grandmother to have said that he ran a line of coaches. I cannot pretend to have examined all the coach registers of the period, but he certainly was not one of the larger coach proprietors, as I can find no mention of him among these in the dozen or two volumes on the subject which I have consulted, therefore I think it more likely that he was one of the many jobbers who "horsed" someone else's coaches for a certain number of miles on their journey. That he was successful in his business is shown by his having retired with a competence. From an unpublished Memoir [1] compiled by Keats's publisher, Taylor, after a conversation with Keats's quondam guardian, Richard Abbey, in 1827, and sent by Taylor to Woodhouse, we learn of Mr. Jennings that "he was excessively fond of the pleasures of the Table and 4 days in the week his wife and family were occupied in preparing for the Sunday's Dinner. He was a complete Gourmand." There is no doubt, however, as to the maliciousness of tone of Abbey's communications, and I think they must be taken with a grain of salt; but since they are the only ones we have concerning Keats's grandfather and grandmother, and are very open in dealing with the character of Keats's mother, they are of the utmost importance.

Through this Memoir, we learn that Mrs. Jennings was a native of the village of Colne, at the foot of Pendlekill, in Yorkshire. Abbey came from the same village, and probably knew Mrs. Jennings from childhood. He seems to have been strongly prepossessed in her favour and gives an instance of her charitable disposition in befriending an unfortunate woman, also from Colne, and after the woman's death bestirring herself to succour her children. He does not seem to have liked her husband and appears to have almost hated her daughter, but whether his dislike — in the former case, at least — was well grounded or not, who can say.

[1] Author's Collection.

There seems to be no doubt that Mrs. Jennings was a good and worthy woman. George Keats, writing to Dilke in April, 1828,[1] speaks of his grandfather Jennings as "extremely generous and gullible," but adds "I have heard my Grandmother speak with enthusiasm of his excellencies." He goes on to tell his correspondent that "Mr. Abbey used to say that he never saw a woman of the talents and sense of my grandmother, except my mother." Naturally George had never seen the Memoir written by Taylor after his talk with Abbey. But considering what Abbey permitted himself to say to Taylor about George Keats's mother on that occasion, George's letter to Dilke leaves us wondering who is lying. Is George attributing sentiments to Abbey which the latter never held in order to throw dust in Dilke's eyes, or had Abbey hypocritically said this to George, or was Abbey letting malice get the better of truth when he spoke to Taylor? The wisest course is to believe neither George nor Abbey implicitly, but to take a middle view between the two and suppose Keats's mother to have been a woman of strong passions and appetites, with no particular desire to curb either, but with something redeeming and attractive about her just the same.

I have debated with some care the advisability of quoting what Abbey says of Mrs. Keats in this Memoir. But believing, as I do, that where so much has been told all should be recorded, realizing also that half truths never lead to fair conclusions, and that a great man can stand complete revelation; considering again that no adequate psychological study of a man's life and character can be made if we fail to take his inheritance into account, I have decided to quote the important parts of the Memoir in full, always cautioning my readers to notice that Abbey was undoubtedly exaggerating to a greater or lesser extent, and that he evidently gloated on blackening the character of

[1] Original letter in Author's Collection.

Mrs. Keats whom he seems to have quite cordially detested.

Here, then, is Taylor's paraphrase of Abbey's communications, continuing directly from the description of Mr. Jennings's love of eating:

> "His Daughter in this respect somewhat resembled him, but she was more absolutely the Slave of her appetites, attributable probably to this for their exciting cause. At an early Age she told my informant, Mr. Abby, that she must and would have a Husband; and her passions were so ardent, he said, that it was dangerous to be with her. She was a handsome, little woman. Her features were good and regular, with the exception of her mouth which was unusually wide. A little circumstance was mentioned to me as indication of her Character — She used to go to a Grocer's in Bishopsgate Street, opposite the Church, probably out of some liking for the owner of the Shop, — but the man remarked to Mr. Abby that Miss Jennings always came in dirty weather, and when she went away, she held her clothes very high on crossing the street, and to be sure, says the Grocer, she has uncommonly handsome Legs. He was not, however, fatally wounded by Cupid the Parthian.
>
> But it was not long before she found a Husband, nor did she go far for him — a Helper in her Father's Stable appeared sufficiently desirable in her Eyes to make her forget the Disparity of their Circumstances, and it was not long before Thomas Keats had the Honour to be united to his Master's Daughter."

After spattering Mr. Keats's character to the best of his ability — a spattering to which I shall have occasion to refer in a moment, but with its antidotes in the shape of less prejudiced accounts — Abbey describes his death with infinite malice and unveracity. The Memoir continues, in Taylor's words:

> "I think it was not more than 8 Months after this Event that Mrs. Keats again being determined to have a Hus-

band, married Mr. Rawlins, a Clerk in Smith Payson and Co.'s — I know very little of him further than that he would have had a Salary of 700£ a year eventually had he continued in his Situation. I suppose therefore that he quitted it on becoming the Proprietor of the Livery Stable by his Marriage with Mrs. Keats, but how long the concern was carried on, or at what period Mr. Jennings died, or relinquished it, I didn't learn. It is perhaps sufficient to know that Rawlins also died after some little Time, and that his Widow was afterwards living *as* the wife of a Jew at Enfield, named Abraham."

Here follows the account of Mrs. Jennings from which I have already quoted, and Taylor again returns to Mrs. Rawlings (for it was not Rawlins, as Taylor supposed) as painted by Abbey:

"Her unhappy Daughter after the Death of her first Husband, became addicted to drinking and in the love of the Brandy Bottle found a temporary gratification to those inordinate appetites which seem to have been in one Stage or other constantly soliciting her. The Growth of this degrading Propensity to liquor may account for the strange Irregularities — or rather Immorality of her after-Life. I should imagine that her Children never saw her, and would hope that they knew not all her Conduct."

We should hope not indeed, if this account of her were strictly true. That it is not, we can guess by the tone of it. Abbey had a good listener in Taylor, and he gave himself the luxury of speaking as he felt. Taylor, in spite of a certain shrewdness, seems to have been considerably gulled by Abbey's speciousness. Both the gulling and the shrewdness appear in this paragraph:

"Abby is a large stout good-natured looking man with a great Piece of Benevolence standing out of the Top of his Forehead." [It was the age of phrenology.] "As he spoke of the Danger of being alone with Miss Jennings I looked to see if I discern any of the Lineaments of the

> young Poet in his Features, but if I had heard the whole of his Story I should have banished the Thought more speedily than it was conceived — never were there two people more opposite than the Poet and this good Man."

We may banish the thought, too, not because Abbey had a "Piece of Benevolence" sticking out of the "Top of his Forehead," but because the idea is completely absurd. But we may thank Taylor for the suggestion since it carries a wide train of possibilities in its wake. Granted that where there is smoke there is fire, Mrs. Keats probably did have qualities leading her to indiscretions, it is not unlikely that she was at once over-sexed and under-educated; that she was weak in self-control seems evident, but what the Memoir goes far to show is that Abbey had received, or thought he had received, some injury from her, an injury which looks very much as though it were a snub. Was Abbey, a married man, unduly attracted by the exuberant young lady, and did he dare something which she resented? His false witness against her husband points to something of the sort. What is a respectable, middle-aged man doing gossiping with a near-by grocer on the subject of a young lady's legs? Something on the part of his caller must have led the grocer on to these revelations. Abbey was, I fear, spying upon Miss Jennings, trying to find out whom she did look upon since she would not look at him. It is not a pretty story, and the gusto with which Abbey related it to Taylor is greatly against him. When Abbey began to speak of things which Taylor knew about, Taylor found him inaccurate, as we can see by this sentence at the end of the Memoir:

> "There is the whole of what he told me respecting John Keats, excepting such particulars as I was better acquainted with perhaps than he himself."

I shall have occasion to come back to the Memoir again, but not in this connection.

Before judging Mrs. Keats, we should look at her through other eyes. George Keats, writing to Dilke in 1825,[1] has this to say of his mother:

> "My mother I distinctly remember, she resembled John very much in the Face was extremely fond of him and humoured him in every whim, of which he had not a few, she was a most excellent and affectionate parent and as I thought a woman of uncommon talents, she was confined to her bed many years before her death by a rheumatism and at last died of a Consumption, she would have sent us to harrow school as I often heard say, if she could have afforded."

Making all allowances for a son's enthusiasm, still this is clearly not the debauched woman depicted by Abbey. In a later letter, the one already referred to, of April, 1828, George contradicts this earlier statement in one particular, for he says: "I do not remember much of my mother," yet he strengthens his impression of her character by adding "but her prodigality, and doting fondness for her children, particularly John, who resembled her in the face."

Cowden Clarke says [2] that Mrs. Keats was "tall, of good figure, with large, oval face, and sensible deportment." She must have been about twenty-eight when Clarke first met her, having been born in 1775. From such very conflicting accounts as these, it seems not too difficult to reconstruct the character of Mrs. Keats. She was certainly a vivacious woman, fond of everything gay and lively, sensuous, ardent in pursuit of any aim, and clever beyond the majority of her sex and station; the sort of person, in short, only too likely to be misunderstood in the narrow circle of her acquaintance. That Keats got his sensuous vigour from his mother seems self-evident; that he sublimated her somewhat raw instincts through the medium of poetry into an ardour for sheer beauty, is a fact

[1] Original letter in Author's Collection.
[2] *Recollections of Writers*, by Charles Cowden Clarke.

which should be easily understood by students of modern psychology. John loved his mother passionately, as is no wonder. He was her first born, and from George's account we can see that she lavished a very special love on him. Buxton Forman records that, during her last illness, John (presumably in some vacation from school) often sat up with her all night, seeing that she got her medicine at the proper times, preparing the nourishment prescribed for her, and reading novels aloud to her, and Clarke says that at her death, which occurred when John was fourteen, his grief was deep and bitter, so much so that in his desolation he hid himself under the master's desk. Poor little shaver, so pitiably unable to cope with his first great sorrow!

Of Thomas Keats, John's father, we know somewhat more; although George, in the letter to Dilke already quoted, says he remembers nothing of his father except that he had dark hair. As Thomas Keats did not die until George was seven, this lack of all recollection is strange. It can only be accounted for by supposing Thomas Keats to have been very much engaged by his business. Cowden Clarke has left us a very careful portrait of him, however. Clarke speaks of him as "a man of so remarkably fine a commonsense, and native respectability, that I perfectly remember the warm terms in which his demeanor used to be canvassed by my parents after he had been to visit his boys. John was the only one resembling him in person and feature." And elsewhere Clarke says: "I have a clear recollection of his lively and energetic countenance, and particularly when seated on his gig and preparing to drive his wife home after visiting his sons at school."

Clarke was apparently wrong as to feature, for George may be trusted to know whether or not John took after his mother in that respect, unless his remembering only that his father had dark hair indicates that he had quite forgotten what he looked like. But the rest of Clarke's description is undoubtedly correct. Thomas Keats was a

short, powerfully built man, like his eldest son, with an ambition and perseverance above the average and with a good mind.

Now that we know how Thomas Keats impressed people of the type of Clarke's father and mother, we may return to the Memoir and see Abbey's malice in full swing, and also deduce, through his prejudice, a little more of the character of Keats's father.

To Abbey's jaundiced eyes, Thomas Keats

> "did not profess or display any just Accomplishments. Elevated perhaps in his notions by the Sudden Rise in his Fortunes he thought it became him to act somewhat more the Man of Consequence than he had been accustomed to do — but it was still in the way of his Profession — He kept a remarkably fine Horse for his own Riding, and on Sundays would go out with others who prided themselves on the like Distinction, to Highgate, Highbury, or to some other place of public Entertainment for Man and Horse. — At length one Sunday night, he was returning with some of his jolly Companions from a Carouse at one of these Places, riding very fast, and most probably very much in Liquor, when his Horse leaped upon the Pavement opposite the Methodist Chapel in the City Road and falling with him against the Iron Railings so dreadfully crushed him that he died as they were carrying him Home."

Abbey distorts facts with a diabolical cleverness. Thomas Keats did die from his horse falling with him, but he lived for seven hours at least after the event. He had been dining out, at Southgate, but where was the harm of that? There is no reason at all to suppose that he was drunk, that is a pure invention of Abbey's, for even he ushers in the statement with a "most probably." Why should not a stable-keeper ride a good horse? In those days, everyone who could kept a good riding horse, many men still preferring to make journeys on horseback rather than in a vehicle. Thomas Keats dealt in horses; they

were not a luxury, but part of his business stock. That he displayed many "just Accomplishments," is proved by Clarke's remembrance of him. Yet, with all the falsity of accent in Abbey's account, one trait in Thomas Keats's character stands out clearly: his ambition to better his condition, to rise in the world. He was no "helper" in the stable, as Abbey insinuates, but the foreman of the establishment, at the time of his marriage; and when he kept the fine horse which so annoyed Abbey, he had become, by the retirement of his father-in-law, its ostensible proprietor. Bettering his condition was apparently one of the dearest wishes of his heart, and there is no reason to suppose that he wished only the froth of such betterment. The frill of being married at Saint George's need not blind us to the realization that beneath it lay both a refined taste and a solid appreciation of the value of education and good manners. Thomas Keats was civilized beyond his class, or endeavoring to become so — and what is strange in that, seeing he was the father of John Keats?

How Keats came by his poetry has been a wonder to all his biographers. But we know more of the workings of the subconscious brain and the whys of genius than the then state of science permitted most of them to do. Mrs. Keats was passionate and weak; Thomas Keats was, or appears to have been, strong; the grandmother Jennings was certainly a woman of good sense. That there was intellect somewhere, must have been the case; at any rate, there was admiration of intellect, or Mr. and Mrs. Keats would not have considered sending the boys to Harrow, as George Keats says they did. Harrow meant not only a classical education, it meant association with boys of a better class than their own. But this is only snobbishness to a half-vision, there is plenty of evidence that Thomas Keats's snobbishness was the shell of an ideal. Here, in father, mother, and grandmother, are a series of inheritances which may well have produced a poet. Even imagination

plays a part, for what was the ideal but an imagined one? Such a high reach for their sons shows an almost fantastic fancy on the part of both father and mother, and a fancy they were willing to abide by. Keats refined upon the imagination as he refined upon the passion, and his intellectual strength forged for both a medium of expression. In other words, character in his case made for creation. This is no new thing; everyone knows that the artist's temperament without the artist's power to create fills our sanitariums with neurotics. Reading between the lines of Abbey's Memoir, it seems likely that Mrs. Keats verged toward this state in her later years; but, poor creature, difficult as she may have been to her family, she did her son an infinite service. Her sympathy with John proves potentialities that she fatally lacked the power of turning into facts. What she had not, strength of character, her husband had, and between them they made their son, transmitting to him much that was unfortunate, it is true, but dowering him with the uncomfortable treasure of genius. Yet there is one question which no probing will satisfactorily answer: Why is there no mention of his parents in any of Keats's letters, even in those to his brothers and sister? There is but one exception to this throughout the correspondence, but the connection in which it occurs is most significant. Writing his third letter to Fanny Brawne from Shanklin, Keats seals it with an old seal of his father's, which he comments upon in this way: "My seal is mark'd like a family table cloth with my Mother's initial F for Fanny: put between my Father's initials." We have no other evidence of Keats's having used this seal, although, of course, he may have done so, but the reason for his using it here is obvious. Keats attached a good deal of weight to seals, as we shall see later. He could speak to Fanny Brawne as he could to no one else, naturally; the jest about the table-cloth is to ease an overflow of tenderness, and in his situation a "famiiy table cloth" was

not without meaning. Leigh Hunt says [1] that Keats never spoke of the livery-stable, and thinks it was "out of a personal soreness which the world had exasperated." If this suspicion of Hunt's be correct, the less man Keats. Let us not seek our answer too far, with Abbey's ugly communication staring us in the face, but even supposing that it contains some grains of truth, Keats's reticence is more likely to have been caused by a feeling of sacredness toward his dead parents than to any sudden revelation of regrettable traits in his mother's character. Knowing how much he loved her, we may suspect a grief with which harness buckles have nothing to do, and a bereavement too deep to be chattered about.

Stepping out of the bounds of immediate descent, Keats's relations appear to have been few and to have played no part at all in his life. On the authority of Clarke, we learn that he had two uncles, brothers of his mother. Our information concerning one of them stops at the mere facts of his existence and early death; the other was a Lieutenant of Marines, Midgly John Jennings, who is supposed to have served in Admiral Duncan's flagship in the action off Camperdown. A family legend has it that this gentleman, being very tall, was a special target for the enemy, who, in spite of his height, failed to hit him. Tales of his valour during the engagement seem to have been current in his old school. I am told by Mr. Holman that naval records [2] show no such person in the roster of the ship's company of the "Venerable," Duncan's flagship. At that time, Jennings was a Second Lieutenant, his promotion to First Lieutenant came in 1799, and he was made Captain in 1808. He survived his promotion to a captaincy by a few months only, as he died on October eighth, 1808. By what inaccuracy his name fails to appear among those serving in the "Venerable," we do not know. His whereabouts dur-

[1] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt.
[2] Memorandum from Public Records Office. June 24, 1913.

ing the engagement has not been traced in the Marine Office Commission Books, but there is a gap in them from 1796 to 1800. That Second Lieutenant Midgly John Jennings, Royal Marine officer, was present at the battle off Camperdown, if not in the "Venerable," then in some other vessel of the fleet, there is no reason whatever to doubt. Edward Holmes, a school-fellow, remembers that [1] "Jennings their sailor relation was always in the thoughts of the brothers, and they determined to keep up the family reputation for courage." Years seem to have dimmed the brightness of the gallant lieutenant's appeal, for he is never once alluded to in the letters, not even when his widow threatens to bring a lawsuit against Abbey, which threat had the effect of seriously incommoding his niece and nephews for some time.

Not long after his daughter's marriage, Mr. Jennings retired from active business, and, leaving his stable in the competent hands of his son-in-law, went to live at Ponders End. For some time after this, Thomas Keats and his wife continued to live at the Swan and Hoop, but before long, probably owing to an increasing prosperity, they moved to Craven Street, City Road. As this new house was only half a mile North of the stable, it was both convenient for business and one of those evident rises in the world so dear to Thomas Keats's heart. From living over a stable to living in a separate house at some distance was no mean gain in those days, and we can imagine the rejoicing which the move occasioned. Some of the younger children, I do not know how many, were born in the Craven Street house.

Of Keats's childhood, we know practically nothing; for I cannot take much stock in the only anecdotes which have come down to us. One derives from Haydon, who dresses it up in his melodramatic style until it loses all semblance of reality. Boiled down to probable fact, the story is that

[1] *Life of John Keats*, by Sir Sidney Colvin.

once, when Mrs. Keats was ill and had been ordered perfect quiet, John, having got hold of an old sword somewhere, mounted guard in front of her door and would allow no one to go into her room. The other tale, also recorded by Haydon, but with less flourish and furor, he says he got from George Keats. An old lady, whom Haydon[1] identifies as a Mrs. Grafty of Craven Street, Finsbury, who had known the boys when they were children, encountering George on some occasion asked him the natural question: "What is John doing?" On George's telling her that John had determined to be a poet, the old lady remarked that such a decision was very odd, because, when he could only just speak, he had a habit of ignoring questions asked him and instead would make a rhyme to the last word spoken by the questioner, after which astonishing behaviour he would laugh as though mightily pleased with himself. In a child of two or three this would surely be remarkable, if it were true. I, for one, do not believe a word of it. It is just the kind of thing that old ladies always recollect of children in after years, but affection and the usual desire of the old to link themselves to the young are the sources of memory.

I have already mentioned that Thomas Keats aspired to Harrow as the school for his sons, but here his imagination outran his pocket. Try as he would, his income would not stretch to such a flight. We can understand with what disappointed reluctance he abandoned the ambitious scheme and decided to follow his father-in-law's example and send his sons to the excellent school kept by Mr. John Clarke at Enfield, ten miles from London. So to Enfield John went in 1803, and either with him, or immediately after, went George.

It was a charming place, architecturally, this Enfield school. Cowden Clarke begins his paper on Keats with a description of it:

[1] *Autobiography and Journals of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, edited by Tom Taylor.

> "The house had been built by a West India merchant in the latter end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century. It was of the better character of the domestic architecture of that period, the whole front being of the purest red brick, wrought by means of moulds into rich designs of flowers and pomegranates, with heads of cherubim over niches in the centre of the building."

So perfect an example was it of a certain type of decoration, that, when it was finally pulled down, the middle of the façade was placed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, where it now is. Attached to the house was a large garden with an arbour, adding just the touch needed to temper the arabesqued brickwork with glimpses of variously tinted green.

This stimulatingly fruity façade, stuffed away from human intercourse in the South Kensington Museum, was once witness to some such scene as this: Two little fellows, six and seven years old respectively, driven out from town in their father's gig, a little awe-stricken probably, a little tearful undoubtedly, at least when their father drove away and left them to face that most terrible of experiences, the first day at a new school.

George was the younger by sixteen months, but so much taller was he than John that Clarke thought he was the older of the two and apparently never found out his mistake. He speaks of John as "the youngest individual in a corporation of between seventy and eighty youngsters," he was "one of the little fellows who had not wholly emerged from the child's costume." We know the dress well from innumerable prints — frilled collar, short jacket, pearl buttons as large as half-crowns, tasselled cap. Two little boys, with home and mother ten miles away, gaped at by "seventy or eighty youngsters," jeered at and teased in the merry fashion of English youth a century ago. Brutal, we should call it; no school of to-day would permit the type of "hazing" which pertained in English schools

to a very recent date. We cannot suppose that the Keats boys escaped until they had made good their title to be let alone. But John was a pugnacious little chap, as all accounts show. Cowden Clarke speaks of his

> "highly pugnacious spirit, which, when roused, was one of the most picturesque exhibitions — off the stage — I ever saw. One of the transports of that marvelous actor, Edmund Kean . . . was its nearest resemblance; and the two were not very dissimilar in face and figure. Upon one occasion, when an usher, on account of some impertinent behaviour, had boxed his brother Tom's ears, John rushed up, put himself in the received posture of offense, and, it was said, struck the usher — who could, so to say, have put him into his pocket. His passion at times was almost ungovernable; and his brother George, being considerably the taller and stronger, used frequently to hold him down by main force, laughing when John was in 'one of his moods' and was endeavouring to beat him. It was all, however, a wisp-of-straw conflagration; for he had an intensely tender affection for his brothers, and proved it upon the most trying occasions. He was not merely the 'favourite of all' like a pet prize-fighter, for his terrier courage; but his high-mindedness, his utter unconsciousness of a mean motive, his placability, his generosity, wrought so general a feeling in his behalf, that I never heard a word of disapproval from any one, superior or equal, who had known him."

Clarke also mentions his "brisk, winning face," a detail which must not be omitted.

Edward Holmes, a school-fellow, and later the author of a *Life of Mozart*, tells the same story: [1]

> "He would fight any one — morning, noon, and night, his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him."

George Keats, who knew his brother intimately, also bears witness to this trait in John's character, but with an even stronger qualification, based on a more under-

[1] Houghton MSS. Crewe Collection. Quoted by Sir Sidney Colvin.

standing knowledge, than Clarke. He speaks of John's "nervous, morbid temperament":

> "From the time we were Boys at school where we loved, jangled, and fought alternately until we separated in 1818 I in a great measure relieved him by continual sympathy, explanation, and inexhaustible spirits, and good humour, from many a bitter fit of hypochondriasm."

This is from the letter written to Dilke in 1825. In another letter, also to Dilke, in 1830,[1] he enlarges upon the subject:

> "I loved him from boyhood even when he wronged me, for the goodness of his heart and the nobleness of his spirit, before we left school we quarrelled often and fought fiercely, and I can safely say and my schoolfellows will bear witness that John's temper was the cause of all, still we were more attached than Brothers ever are — After we left school we never passed an opposing word."

And earlier in the same letter:

> "John was open, prodigal, and had no power of calculation whatever. John's eyes moistened, and his lip quivered at the relation of any tale of generosity of benevolence or noble daring, or at sights of loveliness or distress — he had no fears of self thro interference in the quarrels of others, he would at all hazards, without calculating his power to defend, or his reward for the deed, defend the oppressed or distressed with heart and soul with hand and purse."

Since the man exists in embryo in the child, with these evidences of an older Keats we can construct the little fellow, eight years old, who found himself gazed upon by such a host of alien eyes in the strange school-yard, and we can see him showing the others that here was something to beware. But the extreme sensitiveness which George calls "nervous," "morbid," "hypochondriasm," was even then a part of his make-up, that hyper-delicacy

[1] Author's Collection.

of the nerves of both physical and mental sensation which none of his biographers have sufficiently understood and made allowance for, which was the cause of his poetry on the one hand, and, on the other, of the pitiful letters to Fanny Brawne.

Whatever happened in the school-yard that afternoon, however much like a bantam cockerel bristling for a fight he may have appeared to the other boys, one knows for a certainty what bedtime meant when it came, with his heart bursting with homesickness; and we do not need to be told that he stuffed his bed-clothes into his mouth so that no one should hear the sobs he could not control. For he was his mother's son, and poetry had not yet come to relieve him of overcharged emotion.

The seven and a half, or eight, years (we do not know at what period of the year the boys entered school for the first time, but John left at the end of the Summer term in 1811) of Keats's school life should be taken all of a piece. In order to consider them so, I shall give here a brief outline of the most material events of family history during the years immediately following his entrance.

Hardly more than a year after sending John and George to school, Thomas Keats was killed in the accident of which I have already spoken. I think it very unlikely that this accident was due to liquor or other inadvertence on Mr. Keats's part. Horses are always liable to slip on pavement or cobble-stones, and death seems to have been due to the hitting of Thomas Keats's head on an iron railing rather than to the fall itself. Here is a sober account of the accident printed in the *Times* for Tuesday, April seventeenth, 1804:

> "On Sunday Mr. Keats, livery-stable keeper in Moorfields, went to dine at Southgate; he returned at a late hour, and on passing down the City-road, his horse fell with him, when he had the misfortune to fracture his skull. It was about one o'clock in the morning when the watch-

man found him, he was at that time alive, but speechless; the watchman got assistance, and took him to a house in the neighbourhood, where he died about 8 o'clock."

Their father's death was a more bitter blow to the Keats family than any one could have foreseen. At one stroke, the home was broken up, and with it all those fanciful and affectionate schemes for the future went by the board. The boys did advance in the world, but by their own efforts alone. No careful, wise, and enthusiastic guidance was ever theirs for the asking again. They were pitchforked and tumbled into work they hated without having their wishes consulted in any particular. Their father's direction for them as boys was followed until they had outgrown it; but, after that, they were the constant victims of a narrow-minded opposition which took no account of temperament or aptitude.

To Mrs. Keats, the blow was as devastating as it was destined to be later for her children. Her marriage seems to have been extremely happy. She and her husband were evidently congenial in tastes and outlook; they were young people, stepping boldly on in the world, prospering and deserving to do so. Now all was changed. Frances Keats was clearly not a woman who could live alone; nor does she seem to have been a woman of capacity in affairs. There appears to have been no question of her father's returning to the stable, and we can imagine that Mrs. Keats made a poor job of it as proprietor in her own right. Had she been like other women of her time, place, and profession, notably the famous Mrs. Mountain of the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill, or Mrs. Nelson, of the Bull Inn, Aldgate, who not only "horsed" coaches, but owned them, and ruled their coachmen, guards, and stablemen with firm hands and single-minded shrewdness, all would probably have gone well with her and her children. It was not in her to do any such thing. She was clinging, loving, ardent, but

she was not self-sustaining. It was therefore natural that within a year she should have taken another husband in the person of the Rawlings of Abbey's story. But Rawlings was far from being another Thomas Keats. It may be questioned whether Mrs. Keats was ever so attractive in his eyes as the stable. It is no wonder, then, that the marriage turned out badly. Mrs. Rawlings left her husband after a short experience of life with him, and seems to have left the stable to him on her departure.

The relations of Jennings, Thomas Keats, Mrs. Keats, and Rawlings with the stable are very obscure. Since Mr. Jennings died with money enough to leave his wife comfortably off and bequeath legacies to his children and grandchildren, and the loss of the stable to Rawlings does not seem to have affected his income, it is possible that Thomas Keats had already bought him out. By leaving Rawlings, Mrs. Keats lost all claim to whatever property she had brought to the marriage, and Rawlings seems to have accepted the situation and the stable with perfect calm. She must have lost her whole share in it by running away, for she left her children nothing when she died, and Rawlings evidently felt under no obligation to provide for them. If the Jew named Abraham were not a fiction of Abbey's brain, she probably went to him on leaving Rawlings. But that connection also went wrong, and it was a broken woman, sick, lonely, and hopeless, who returned to her mother's house, never to move again.

There is no means of finding out how long it took all these things to happen. Mr. Jennings died at Ponder's End on May eighth, 1805, leaving something over £13,000. His will,[1] which was drawn on February first, 1805, bequeathed a capital yielding an income of £200 a year to his widow outright, together with all the household furniture, etc., and another carrying a yearly income of £50 to his daughter, with reversion to her Keats children after her

[1] *Reports of Chancery*, Vol. XIII, by Francis Vesey, Jr.

death; he also bequeathed £1000 to each of the children to be held in separate trusts and not divided until the youngest should come of age.[1] To his son, Midgly John Jennings, he left £2000 in East India stock and £1900 in "Bank Security called the New Fives"; apparently this money was merely a life estate to be returned to the main trust in the event of his son's death, but, if Mrs. Midgly John Jennings should survive her husband, she was to receive the sum of £500. Charles Danvers, Midgly John Jennings, and Alice Jennings were named as executors and executrix, but the will was proved by Mrs. Jennings and Lieutenant Jennings only, Danvers probably refusing to serve.

Mr. Jennings may have supposed that these bequests would account for his entire capital, but, as a matter of fact, there was a certain sum still remaining after the provisions of the will had been fulfilled. It was thought best that the disposal of this money should be determined by the Court of Chancery. For this reason, a friendly suit was brought by Mrs. Rawlings against her mother and brother as executors under her father's will. The suit dragged on for nearly twenty years, until all the principals were dead. It was finally disposed of in 1823–24, when John Keats had been dead for three years and Tom for five. Most of the financial difficulties suffered by the family were due to this Chancery suit.

I have assumed that Mr. and Mrs. Jennings, on leaving the Swan and Hoop, went to live at Ponder's End, because it was there that Mr. Jennings died. It must have been almost immediately after his death, therefore, that Mrs. Jennings moved to Church Street, Edmonton; her name appears in the Rate Books of Lower Edmonton first in 1806. If Sir Sidney Colvin's surmise that Mrs. Rawlings's return to her mother's house and her father's death were practically synchronous, it was to the Edmonton house

[1] Colvin.

that Mrs. Rawlings returned. For five years she lived there, until her death in 1810. So the scene is set for Keats's school life. London passes out of his orbit; his life revolves between the Clarke school at Enfield and his grandmother's house at Edmonton.

Exactly when Tom joined his brothers at school is not known, but probably as soon as he was considered old enough. At whatever age he went, we may be sure it was too soon for his health. He was a very delicate boy, and schools in those days were for the strong. I know no more pathetic record than the tablets put up to the memory of poor little boys who died at school in the cloister of Winchester College, for example, realizing as we must that most of these deaths were due to insufficient care and unwise medical treatment. Tom Keats never outgrew his delicacy. On the contrary, his life was one steady march toward the consumption which finally killed him at the age of nineteen.

Beyond Enfield and Edmonton was the world, and the world in 1805 deserves some notice. On December second, 1804, Napoleon had been consecrated and crowned as "Emperor of the French." This magnificent ceremony had been performed by no less a person than the Pope, Pius VII, especially imported for the occasion, and thereafter "induced" to remain for four months in Paris to obviate any consequences that might accrue on his immediate return to Rome. His benediction thus summarily extorted, Napoleon preferred to be alone responsible for the more important part of the affair; he arranged that the actual crowning should be done by the greatest man in the world at that time — he crowned himself. Anxious to establish the new imperial household with all possible speed, Napoleon was summoning home all those *émigrés* who were willing to become a part of the new order; but, considering that France was at war with England, Russia, Austria, and Sweden, they could return but slowly.

For two years, Napoleon had been threatening to invade England. His great camp on the sands at Boulogne had been matched by camps up and down the English coast on the opposite side of the channel. Not one comfortable night had the dwellers in the coast villages of Sussex, Kent, Hampshire, and Dorsetshire known in all that time. Now, with the new coalition against France entered into by the four countries I have named, conditions on the Rhine frontier required attention, and Napoleon was obliged to withdraw his troops from Boulogne to send them hot-foot to meet the advancing Austrians, whom he defeated at Ulm on October seventeenth, 1805. England's part in the war at this time was purely naval; but, restricted as it was, it was thorough, for four days after Ulm, on October twenty-first, the British fleet under Nelson wiped the combined French and Spanish fleets practically out of existence at the the Battle of Trafalgar, and the menace of invasion became an old wives' tale for a hundred and ten years, when it once more raised its grim head in another connection during the Great World War we have just past through. Beaten at sea, Napoleon was at the height of his glory on land, and at the Battle of Austerlitz, fought in the December following, the combined Russians and Austrians were defeated.

One can imagine the excitement that these stirring events must have brought to a boys' school. For, although both army and navy were made up of professional fighters, many of the boys must have had relations in one or other service; and, while conscription was not resorted to, a robust and unsentimental government winked its eye at lies, cajolements, much treating with brandy, whiskey, etc. on the part of recruiting sergeants, and the even more abominable kidnapping methods resorted to by the navy press-gangs.

George the third was king, during his last lucid interval before going hopelessly insane in 1811. William Pitt was

prime minister, until his death in January, 1806. When anything went wrong, the *habeas corpus* act was suppressed until it went right again, as in Robert Emmet's easily quashed insurrection in Ireland in 1803. Persons so misguided as to steal sheep or pick pockets, if not hanged at once, were transported to Botany Bay in Australia. Slaves, although not permitted in England, were freely brought to the British holdings in the West Indies. India was falling, piece by piece, under British rule in the shape of the East India Company.

A series of petty indignities connected with the "right of search," an extension of the press-gang policy, offered by British ships to American ships at sea, was leading up to the war of 1812. Fleets of merchant ships convoyed by men-of-war as a safeguard, not only against enemies, but against African and Asian pirates or random buccaneers, crossed the seas constantly to India, China, and the West Indies. Japan alone remained impenetrable and unknown.

It is strange to look back and think of these things and realize how little they seem to have affected the life of the ordinary English citizen of that time. A few travelled people, chiefly of the nobility, who had rejoiced in the efficient succour rendered by Nelson and Lady Hamilton to the Neapolitan Bourbons in 1799, must have grieved to know that Napoleon had proclaimed himself King of Italy, with Eugene Beauharnais as Viceroy of Naples.

Life, as the ordinary citizen knew it, was a much quieter affair than such events might lead one to suppose. Considering that there were no railroads, people got about the country with a remarkable persistence and dispatch. The nobility travelled in its own carriages; the gentry made use of the innumerable post-chaises with relays of horses; for those of more moderate incomes, there were excellent coach lines running in every direction for which bookings were obtained at inns with picturesque names like "The Swan with Two Necks" or "The Bull and

Mouth"; and, if pressed for time, the extraordinarily swift mail-coaches left the London Post Office every evening at sundown. Letters, rarely prepaid, were folded, with the flap fastened down by sealing-wax, and sent to be paid at what we should consider an inordinately high rate by the recipient, unless the sender were lucky enough to obtain a frank from some great personage; they crossed the seas in sailing packets, usually confided in bundles to someone's acquaintance who was making the voyage, in order to save the really great expense of over-seas postage. And yet all the world, the English world, wrote and wrote prodigiously. By means of innumerable letters, we may know the period as though it were our own. Apologies to correspondents for the amount they will have to pay are frequent, but no instance in which a correspondent has been urged to write more briefly has ever come to my attention. Keats prepaid only his letters to Fanny Brawne, a fact worth noticing, I think.

Police, there were none. In London, their place was taken by a rather inefficient body of men known as "the watch," who paraded their various beats in ones or twos, armed with staves and lanterns, shouting out the hours of the night and the type of weather prevailing, and when not so engaged huddled in sentry-boxes placed up and down the town for their accommodation. The streets were lit at night by means of oil lamps; small whale-oil lamps were sometimes used in houses, but candles, tallow or wax, were the common form of domestic lighting. Huge cut-glass chandeliers, the smooth facets of which were purposely designed to increase the light of the candles, illuminated public halls, ball-rooms, and theatres. The stage was in one of its most flourishing periods, with Mrs. Siddons and her brother, John Kemble, as its chief stars; Italian opera was in high vogue, varied by occasional excursions into Mozart, etc. The two great theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, alternated seasons of opera and

plays. Shakespeare was acted constantly, while a light English opera, built more or less upon the favoured Italian model, had a large following. Smaller theatres, considered of no standing, gave entertainments consisting of clownings, squibs, and comic songs; they were the forerunners of our vaudeville houses, but had no such patronage as these enjoy.

The great school of portrait painters was slowly giving place to a school of landscape painters, among them Turner and Constable. An immense hope and ferment were in the air. Even those who had believed that the French Revolution was to mark the beginning of Paradise on earth, and who owned to a bitter and disillusioning disappointment, had been, nevertheless, so wrought upon and ploughed into, that they were, however unwittingly, seed-ground for new ideas. Even when, ten years later, the Battle of Waterloo proclaimed the permanence of existing order, the ferment of thought could not altogether be stayed. In literature, it made Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley — it made Keats. Already, in 1805, literature was undergoing a rejuvenation. That the world scarcely realized it, is nothing. We can see that it was there. In 1796, a modest little volume had been printed by one Cottle of Bristol; it was entitled *Poems on Various Subjects* and was by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Two years later appeared the epoch-making *Lyrical Ballads* by Coleridge and Wordsworth, which contained *The Ancient Mariner*; and, in 1807, Wordsworth's *Poems* was published. But before this (bombshells, had they been but better known), were the books of William Blake: *The Songs of Innocence* and *The Book of Thel*, both ready for distribution in 1787, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790, and in 1793 *The Gates of Paradise* and *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. The world took no notice of Blake, and but little of Wordsworth; it was still concerned with Cowper, Burns, Crabbe, etc., and the light it saw and hailed as the coming star was

the very dubious one of Sir Walter Scott's ballads. But the real light was there, all the same, the light kindled by the bonfire dreams of a world rejuvenation. Keats was not one of its earliest rays, but he came at the time of its day-spring and did his share to increase its brilliance.

I have taken so much space to recapitulate what everybody knows, because the world I have briefly sketched is not only the setting for the years of Keats's school-days, but for practically his whole life. So modern in many ways is this world of a hundred years ago, that we are surprised at its occasional differences from the one we live in. I think we, to-day, can understand Keats better than the men of previous generations could. They were nearer to him in time, but not in temper; for — strange paradox! — Keats was an almost completely modern man. Once grasp that idea, and a good many of his difficulties with life and with poetry become comprehensible.

I do not mean for a moment that he *wrote* as the modern poets do, but that he *thought* as they do, and as his contemporaries most emphatically did not. Take the letters of the time — Shelley's, Byron's, Hunt's, Miss Edgeworth's, almost any you like — and you are conscious of a different strain of thought, feeling, and expression from ours. In Keats's letters, you are conscious of nothing of the kind. Occasional references to the world we have been considering appear in them, of course, but they are mere incidents, and do not, for one moment, make the letters "quaint" to us, as old letters usually are.

We know the time very well from innumerable sources, and perhaps from none better than the novels of Jane Austen. No one can deny that Jane Austen's books are very much alive, but they date, the period is always present to us as we read. Where is the period in Keats's letters? Right here, now, in our own minds. George Keats's epistolary style is old-fashioned and stiff; Severn's is old-fashioned and sentimental; Bailey's is old-fashioned and

cumbersome; but Keats himself, even with the difference of a turn of phrase here and there, is all of to-day. Any real consideration of Keats's life must keep constantly in view the world he lived in, and the type of man he was living in this world. His life was one long, blind struggle to outdistance his mental environment. Insufficiently equipped, uncertain of his way, not even thoroughly aware of his own goal, unwisely guided by his friends, ignorantly and cruelly criticized by his enemies, buffeted by the hurricanes of his own changing ideas, Keats died at the age of twenty-five still unformed in many ways, profoundly discouraged and dissatisfied, but leaving behind him a body of work in his poems which does not die because of qualities in it even more important to mankind than those which appear on the surface, and in his letters a possibly no less valuable legacy to the student of psychology and a volume of perennial charm to the ordinary reader.

John Clarke's school was one of the many academies dotted over England, designed to impart a moderate degree of education to the sons of professional men of meagre incomes and tradesmen of the better class. It did not aspire to turn out thoroughly well-grounded classical scholars nor embryonic mathematicians. It taught the three "Rs" and taught them well. Latin, of course, bulked large in the curriculum, but if Greek were taught at all, Keats did not take it. There were rudiments of science — astronomy, geology, botany probably, possibly a little physics — and there was French, this last made easy by the hosts of needy Frenchmen escaped from revolutionary France. Probably French has never been so well taught in England as it was at just that time, and Keats learnt to read it with perfect ease. The Latin he acquired, if not a great deal, was serviceable, and gave him considerably more than itself. But the important thing about the school for Keats was that the headmaster's son acted as one of the ushers, and this son was Charles Cowden Clarke.

During the first part of his school life, Keats gave no indication of extraordinary intellectual power. He was the ordinary happy, rough-and-tumble school-boy. He was fond of games; Holmes[1] says: "In all active exercises he excelled." On half-holidays and during vacations, he loved to roam about the fields and paddle in brooks and ponds, and he was fond of making pets of wild and irreconcilable animals. Writing to Fanny Keats, many years later, he asks her to tell him what she would like him to give her, adding: "Anything but live stock. Though I will not now be very severe on it, remembering how fond I used to be of Goldfinches, Tomtits, Minnows, Mice, Ticklebacks, Dace, Cock Salmons and the whole tribe of the Bushes and Brooks: but verily they are better in the Trees and water."

We can easily see how indulgent, not only his mother, but his grandmother also, must have been, to allow him to bring his incongruous pets home in such casual profusion. Love was not lacking in the Edmonton home, that is certain. He tells the whole story in a doggerel rhyme of reminiscence sent in another letter to his sister:

"There was a naughty Boy
A naughty boy was he
He kept little fishes
In washing tubs three
In spite
Of the might
Of the Maid
Nor afraid
Of his Granny-good —
He often would
Hurly burly
Get up early
And go
By hook or crook
To the brook
And bring home
Miller's thumb

[1] Colvin.

Tittlebat
Not over fat
Minnows small
As the stall
Of a glove

. . .

O he made
'Twas his trade
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle — A Kettle
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle!"

The kettle is evidently a quotation from the expressed view of the mighty maid, with difficulty subdued by the good grandmother. Sir Sidney Colvin has given us so pleasant a picture of this brook that I cannot do better than quote it here:

[1] "Despite the changes which have overbuilt and squalidly or sprucely suburbanized all those parts of Middlesex, the Pymmes brook still holds its course across half the county, is still bridged by the main street of Edmonton, and runs countrywise, clear and open, for some distance along a side street on its way to join the Lea."

Again, Sir Sidney describes the countryside, which was the scene of Keats's half-holiday excursions:

[2] "Across the levels of the Lea valley . . . rose the softly shagged undulations of Epping forest, a region which no amount of Cockney frequentation or prosaic vicinity can ever quite strip of its primitive romance. Westward over Hornsey to the Highgate and Hampshire heights, north-westward through Southgate towards the Barnets, and thence in a sweep by the remains of Enfield Chace, was a rich tract of typically English country, a country of winding elm-shadowed lanes, of bosky hedge and thicket and undulating pasture and corn-land charmingly diversified with parks and pleasances."

[1] Colvin. [2] *Ibid.*

Keats learnt the country, and its fauna and flora, practically by heart. Touches of his boyhood sports in it crop up here and there in his poems. In *Sleep and Poetry*, we have a school-boy "riding the springy branches of an elm" and "a pigeon tumbling in clear summer air," and the brook and his games with it are in *Endymion*, when he remembers that he used to "bubble up the water through a reed" and

> ". . . make me ships
> Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,
> With leaves stuck in them, "

and also, in the same poem, we have a recollection of looking

> "Athwart the sallows of a river nook
> To catch a glance at silver throated eels."

These were the high lights of his inconsequential early years at the Clarke school. But we must not forget the low lights, recorded by his brother George. The moments of misery over some trifle of huge import to him at the time, the fits of the "blues" which came so suddenly and wrought such havoc. He kept these things for his brothers, although Holmes seems to have been an occasional witness of their results. Clarke, naturally, knew nothing of them, but George's testimony is enough.

Games, fights, and rambles, with an overbalanced proportion of "blue devils" to temper their delights, and about as much study as could be got along on, seem to have made up Keats's life in his first school years. Holmes[1] refers to "his extraordinary vivacity and personal beauty," which with the farther remark that "his sensibility was as remarkable as his indifference to be thought well of by the master as 'a good boy' and to his tasks in general," rounds out his portrait for us. But, Holmes adds, and we must

[1] Colvin.

ponder his expression: "He was in every way the creature of passion." Once more in this we see his mother's son, more exactly like her than he will ever be again. For his mind has not waked up, and he has not yet been taken possession of by his intellectual faculties.

All at once it came — the love of literature — and with passion, naturally, what else could one expect. Keats's was not a character of half measures. He may not have cared a rap for the master's opinion, but he seems to have done well enough in his classes, for Clarke says that "he was a most orderly scholar." But when it came — it came! Order gave place to profusion. Holmes is firm on the point "that he was not literary," but that "this taste came out rather suddenly and unexpectedly." He dates it "about the year before he left school." Clarke speaks of it as occurring in "the last two or three successive half years before he left school." Suddenly books started into life for him. He probably cared as little for the encomiums of his masters as ever, but he began to care a lot for the studies themselves. Clarke's account shows his manner of work, quite passionately unbalanced, of course:

> "He was at work before the first school-hour began and that was at seven o'clock; almost all the intervening times of recreation were so devoted; and during the afternoon holidays, when all were at play, he would be in the school — almost the only one — at his Latin or French translation; and so unconscious and regardless was he of the consequences of so close and persevering an application, that he never would have taken the necessary exercise had he not been sometimes driven out for the purpose by one of the masters."

The bad habit of recording events in different groupings, so dear to the hearts of biographers, has obscured a governing cause for this change of direction in Keats's life. His mother died of consumption in February, 1810. We have already seen how close was the tie between Keats and his

mother, we know how deeply her death affected him. It shook his world to its foundation; it broke his life to bits. But grief is a great maturer. I believe that this intimate experience with sorrow started Keats's intellectual faculties functioning as they never had before. He must have speculated on, and fiercely combatted with, death; and, seeking the reason for bereavement, cudgelling his mind for some explanation of the cruel paradox of life always reaching an end, of love snapped off and bleeding, suddenly stumbled upon a dormant part of himself.

With his life changed and shattered, we can conceive that home holidays were more sad than merry. Many men, in his then state of mind, have flung over their responsibilities and sought to flee sorrow by change of scene and activity. Keats was not his own master; he could not change his scene, but he could alter his mode of life. Books came to him like a soporific saturated with dreams. With his vivid imagination, he could literally live in them. Even the dull work of prescribed translation could be made to deaden the ache of his loss if he set at it hard enough. If he played, or rambled, or fought, he could still think, and thinking meant to open himself to the intolerable agony of missing; but if his thinking faculties were engrossed in hard work, the nerves of sensation were for the moment numb. Considering that Keats was, innately, one of the most literary of men, what was begun as a relief from pain ended by becoming a conscious delight. Not the lessons, we can hardly suppose that Keats revelled in them for their own sakes, but the books he read for pleasure, and Latin and French exercises quickly took on the aspect of means by which he would be enabled to read more books.

He read everything he could lay his hands on, and he read with an extremely eager and brilliantly active imagination. Clarke thinks that "he must, in those last months, have exhausted the school library, which consisted principally of abridgements of all the voyages and travels

of any note; Mavor's collection, also his *Memorial History*, Robertson's histories of Scotland, America, and Charles the Fifth; all Miss Edgeworth's productions, together with many other works well calculated for youth. The books, however, that were his constantly recurring sources of attraction were Tooke's *Pantheon*, Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, which he appeared to *learn*, and Spence's *Polymetis*." Holmes[1] adds to this formidable list, *Robinson Crusoe* and "something about Montezuma and the Incas of Peru," these last probably out of Robertson or Marmontel. Holmes continues:

> "He must have read Shakespeare as he thought that 'no one would dare to read *Macbeth* alone in a house at two o'clock in the morning.'"

This remark is refreshing as showing that even in the first flush of literary interest Keats was no pedant, but a perfectly healthy, sensible, imaginative boy of fifteen. Except for Miss Edgeworth, nothing is said in these lists of current popular authors, but Keats admitted later to an adolescent admiration for Beattie's *Minstrel* and Mrs. Tighe's sentimental effusion *Psyche*, and we must not overlook the novels he had been in the habit of reading to his mother.

"Always in extremes," is Holmes's summary of him, "in passions of tears or outrageous fits of laughter"; now to these were added positive debauches of reading. The Clarke school must have been an easy-going place, for Clarke writes:

> "In my 'mind's eye' I now see him at supper (we had our meals in the schoolroom) sitting back on the form, from the table, holding the folio volume of Burnet's *History of his Own Time* between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it."

Under these circumstances, we are not surprised to learn

[1] Colvin.

from Clarke that "for the last two or three successive half years of his remaining at school . . . he took the first prize by a considerable distance."

These prizes seem to have consisted of books or silver medals, but which meant the most we can only conjecture, although Clarke does say that books were given for voluntary work done in recreation hours. The first prize which we know of Keats's receiving [1] was a book so odd in character that we can only account for it by remembering that most of the boys in the Clarke school were undoubtedly destined for trade; it was Kaufmann's *Dictionary of Merchandise*. It is inscribed: "Mr. Clarke's School at Enfield. Awarded to Master John Keats as a Reward of Merit. 1809." Did Keats, the vivacity of whose reading appetite was only just beginning, attempt to read his prize, we wonder? The second prize he received was a silver medal.[2] It bears on one side the inscription: "Prize medal. Rev. Wm. Thomas's Academy, Enfield. 1810. Awarded to Master J. Keats"; on the other side is a Latin inscription: "*Stadium doctrinæ arduum & difficile sit nihilominus Finis gloriosus erit*," and the words "*Audivit Clarkenem*" running round the edge. The school, on Cowden Clarke's authority, is usually spoken of as Mr. John Clarke's school, and John Clarke was certainly the headmaster in Keats's time. But evidently he either acted as manager of an academy of which Mr. Thomas was the — presumably retired — proprietor, or, more likely, he had succeeded to a school once run by Mr. Thomas. The name of Mr. Thomas might tend to throw some doubt on the authenticity of the medal, but one of George Keats's granddaughters distinctly remembers seeing it often at her grandmother's when she was a child. The third prize won by Keats was again a book, Bonnycastle's *Introduction to Astronomy*, and this time the inscription reads:

[1] *Letters and Poems of John Keats*, by John Gilman Speed.
[2] Author's Collection.

"Assigned as a Reward of Merit to Ma^r *John Keats* at Mr. Clarke's Enfield *Mids.* 1811." Since in both these books the school is spoken of as "Mr. Clarke's," I think it probable that the die for the silver medal was made when the school was in the Rev. William Thomas's hands, and that, to save the expense of a new die, the old one was still used, with the words "*Audivit Clarkenem*" added. If this speculation be true, it argues a very special thriftiness on the part of Mr. Clarke, who had had the school for over twenty years by this time; yet it seems more probable than that the medal should be struck for a master who did not take possession until at least two years later. Keats left school at the end of the midsummer term, but for some reason he was given a fourth book the next year, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, not, probably, as a prize, but as a mark of friendship and approbation, since in it is written in a flourishing hand with much ornamental underlining: "John Keats emer: 1812." John Keats, *emeritus*, for he was no longer a scholar. That Keats received several books and only one medal, and that in 1810, goes far to substantiate my theory that it was precisely in 1810, the year of his mother's death, that Keats did his hardest studying apart from his reading for pleasure.

At this point, we must go back a little and take up the family fortunes once more. Her daughter's death seems to have startled Mrs. Jennings into the realization that she alone was left to care for her four young grandchildren. She was no longer even middle-aged, and the death of her husband, son, son-in-law, and daughter, all occurring within six years, must have shaken her considerably. She was the sole stay of her daughter's little family, and that family consisted of three boys, the oldest on the eve of growing up, and one little girl of seven years old. The thought of bringing up three obstreperous boys all alone probably appalled her, and the little girl would need care for many years to come. Taking heed of her advanced age — she was seventy-

four — she wisely decided to protect the children from all eventualities. I say "wisely," because the idea was a wise one, but the persons selected to carry it out were not a good choice. Mrs. Jennings did not, probably, have a very large acquaintance to choose from, and it cannot have been easy to find any one willing to assume the guardianship of four children. Her old friend and fellow townsman, Richard Abbey, now a prosperous wholesale coffee and tea merchant with a warehouse and counting-room at 4 Pancras Lane, London, seemed the natural person to whom she could turn. She could not have guessed his hostility to her daughter and Thomas Keats, or she would not have designated him as guardian for their children. Blind to this side of Abbey, she did choose him, but associated with him another merchant, Rowland Sandell. The deed putting the children under the guardianship of these two men was executed in the July following her daughter's death. At the same time, she appointed them trustees of a trust to become active from that date, consisting of the best part of the property she had received from her husband. This trust was to be administered solely for the benefit of the children. Mrs. Jennings lived four years after this arrangement was made, but as it was to take effect at once, that meant that she virtually resigned control over the children from that moment. She must have felt herself very weary and old to do such a thing, and her doing so proved her complete confidence in the guardians she had appointed.

Rowland Sandell resigned his position very soon, probably long before Mrs. Jennings's death, for there is no farther question of him after the drawing of the deed. But Mr. Abbey took up his new responsibility at once, and thoroughly, with, as far as we know, perfect concurrence on the part of Mrs. Jennings. The boys remained at school, Fanny with her grandmother, and so things continued for a year.

What Abbey was, or was not, it is a little difficult to say.

George Keats, who seems to have got on well with him, speaks of him as sensible and worthy; John, on the other hand, clearly regarded him as incompetent, fussy, and disagreeable. Fanny Keats, who lived with him and his wife after her grandmother's death, gives the impression of having been thoroughly unhappy in the connection, and to have felt no love for either his wife or him. Dilke, who took over Fanny's property when she came of age, considered that Abbey had muddled things badly. Taylor, in the letter[1] I have so often quoted, speaks of his kindness and generosity; but Taylor apparently received much of this impression from Abbey's own mouth, which may not be an entirely trustworthy source. What Taylor does say of him clearly proves him to have been set in his ways, with little or no elasticity of mind or temperament. Taylor records, in this letter, an anecdote told him by a Mr. Macauley who, meeting Abbey at the Girdler's[2] Dinner, scarcely knew him: "The reason," in Taylor's words, "was this, he had that Day put on Trousers for the first Time having worn till then white Cotton Stockings and Breeches and half-Boots. When for a long Time there had been no other Man on the Exchange in that Dress — and he was become so conspicuous for it as to be an Object of attention in the Streets, he had at last resolved to come into the Fashion."

Unimaginative, conservative, opinionated, and utterly without capacity, such seems to have been Abbey's character from whatever angle we view him. Probably the cruelty of which he often seems guilty arose from sheer stupidity. He may have tried to do well by his charges, but always in his own way without regard to their feelings. He liked George, tolerated Fanny, and entirely disapproved of John and Tom, which disapproval led him to

[1] Abbey Memoir. Author's Collection.

[2] One of the City Companies. Girdlers — makers of girdles — as a separate trade now extinct.

misconstrue their actions at every turn. He seems to have gritted his teeth over his trust and grimly done his best, with all the well-meaning severity of a blundering, narrow-minded, bustling fool.

As I have said, during the first year of Abbey's guardianship, he permitted things to remain in *statu quo*. Then the sight of a boy going on for sixteen, wasting the formative years over studies which, so far as Abbey could see, led to no profitable end, was more than he could bear. To be sure, John was not penniless. In the first place, there was his share of the small trust placed in Abbey's hands by Mrs. Jennings. Farthermore, there was his reversionary right to a fourth of his mother's legacy, and the one thousand pounds directly bequeathed to him by his grandfather, to say nothing of the money tied up in Chancery. But Abbey was shrewd enough to realize that all this amounted in immediate fact to very little. Mrs. Jennings's total capital, before making the trust, produced only two hundred pounds a year, and the capital itself was liable to the vicissitudes of all invested moneys, while the sum which constituted the trust was necessarily less; Mrs. Rawlings's reverted legacy would yield her children only about twelve pounds a year each. As to the direct bequest, that could not be touched until Fanny Keats came of age, which would not happen for fourteen years; and the money tied up in Chancery was not worth considering at all to any one who knew the habit of suits in Chancery. The money to be counted upon, present and due, would make a nice little nest-egg for each of the children to start out in the world, which was what it was intended for. But the boys must start, as soon as they reached an age to do so. That was Abbey's very sensible opinion, and probably every one else's also, and when I say "every one," I include the boys themselves. This granted, Abbey submitted that John's time for starting had come, possibly George's also. In George's case, the matter was simple.

Abbey was willing to take him into his counting-house, George was willing to go. So that was settled.

It was considerably more difficult to know what to do with John. A fellow who had taken three first prizes at school, and who showed not the slightest interest in business, was obviously destined by nature for a profession. So thought Abbey. If Thomas Keats had been alive, he would probably have seen "Oxford" or "Cambridge" written in letters of flame upon the sky, and strained his every nerve to fulfil such an obvious prophecy. But Thomas Keats was dead, and the Clarke school did not prepare for the universities. John himself had no desire except to read all and every day, which, as even he doubtless admitted, was not exactly in line with adopting a profession.

We can imagine the family conclaves, with Abbey, Mrs. Jennings, and John, all discussing the important question of what John was to do. The church meant a university career — out of the question; the army may have been canvassed, and the navy, but Lieutenant Jennings was dead, and Abbey's aspirations were of a more modest order. What, except reading, had John shown an aptitude for? Mrs. Jennings recollected his careful and efficient tending of his mother. Here was something to cling to. John could be a surgeon. Surgery, in those days, occupied a position mid-way between a trade and a profession. It was not so long since surgeons had been barbers as well, even now they were apothecaries. The physicians were a higher grade, in public opinion. To be a physician, one had to undergo an arduous course of study, preferably at Edinburgh, and spend long years in training; it was beyond bounds in Abbey's philosophy to think of John becoming a physician, but a surgeon might be considered. Physicians were gentlemen and were addressed as "Dr."; surgeons were ordinary men like one's self and were called simply "Mr." like everybody else. How great surgeons like Astley

Cooper became such, no one could guess; they happened, remarkably happened, occasionally, but Abbey harboured no such glorious desire for John Keats. A good, honest country doctor, riding round in a gig, pulling teeth, compounding pills and potions, setting bones indifferent well, and earning enough to keep a decent house over his head, that was enough. And this could be accomplished. "Well, John, how does it strike you?" we can suppose Abbey asking, and John seems to have made no objection.

A Mr. Thomas Hammond, surgeon, living in Church Street, Edmonton, probably well known to Mrs. Jennings, and certainly not unknown to Keats, as he was often called to the Clarke school, was in need of an apprentice. Here was opportunity. Abbey, with characteristic promptness, took it. Keats was withdrawn from school at the end of the Midsummer term of 1811 and bound apprentice to Mr. Hammond.

George Keats, writing to Dilke in 1824,[1] says that Keats paid "two hundred Guineas and expenses" to Mr. Hammond. This appears to have been an error on George's part, as the sum paid by a surgeon's apprentice in those days was forty pounds. I am inclined to doubt the accuracy of George's financial statements to Dilke, as they do not seem, in certain instances, to tally with others made by him in letters contemporary to the events. Later in the same letter he speaks of a "premium" of two hundred pounds having been paid to Mr. Hammond, and apprenticeship fees of thirty pounds. For a surgeon to exact a premium over and above the usual fees, does not seem to have been the general custom, and I cannot but think that George's memory played him false on the subject.

Sir William Osler,[2] speaking of an indenture of a sur-

[1] Author's Collection.

[2] In an address on Keats delivered before the Johns Hopkins Historical Club in October, 1895. Published in the *Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin*, 1896.

geon's apprentice which was made out for his uncle in 1811, says:

> "The surgeon, for a consideration of £40, without board, undertook the care and education of the apprentices, of whom there were often three or four . . . The young apprentice promised not 'to haunt taverns or playhouses, not to play at dice or cards, nor absent himself from his said master's service day or night unlawfully, but in all things as a faithful apprentice he shall behave himself towards his said master and all his during the said time.'"

Keats was bound for five years, the usual term, and the "expenses," mentioned by George Keats probably refer to his board which the fee itself did not cover. The fee and expenses were paid by Abbey out of John's share of the money in his (Abbey's) hands.

A surgeon's apprentice in those days was a sort of handy general house and stable boy. He made up medicines, tended the shop, ran errands, went with his master on his rounds and held the horse, did, in fact, whatever there was to do in connection with the odds and ends of practice, and, as he became more proficient, acted as his master's assistant by doing all those things which we are accustomed to see done by an office nurse. His education depended entirely on the type of man he was apprenticed to. If his master lived up to his part of the bargain, he might learn a great deal; if his master were lazy or incompetent, the time of his apprenticeship was wasted. But, whatever the master, the circumstances were such that a bright boy could pick up much more than he was actually taught. Keats was a very bright boy. Leaving his genius entirely out of the question, his was a mind of very exceptional capacity. The fact is that, willy nilly, he became a good doctor. In the case of his own fatal illness, it is always his diagnoses which are right and those of his attending physicians which are wrong. Whatever was interesting, interested him, even

if other things interested him more. He simply could not help learning, he had that sort of mind.

Clarke says that he liked his new job, for "with the exception of the duty he had to perform in the surgery — by no means an onerous one — his whole leisure hours were employed in indulging his passion for reading and translating." Clarke makes no mention of book tasks, but there must have been some. He must have studied anatomy and physiology, and got a considerable amount of his *materia medica* by heart. But evidently these things came to him easily and quickly. His habit of concentrated study helped him there. Mr. Hammond kept two apprentices, which presupposes a fairly large practice; but, however that may have been, Keats seems to have had plenty of spare time, and on the whole he does not appear to have objected to the place — at first, at any rate. Clarke thinks his apprenticeship was "the most placid period of his painful life."

Here let me point out a common mistake made by many people, and in this sentence by Clarke in his words "painful life." Taken as a whole, Keats's life was painful. The bereavements of his earlier, and the griefs of his later, life must have made it so. But we should never forget that in these few years of his growing poetic talent he was supremely happy, as happy as his passionate temperament allowed him to be. He had a genius for friendship, a saving and joyous sense of humour, and a fund of animal spirits, while, together with all this, he realized an ever increasing power of creative force within him than which nothing is more satisfying to the possessor. Nothing in life equals the pain and the joy of successful artistic creation except the fulfilment of reciprocated love, and in these early years Keats had not arrived at love, creation contented him. If he had deep and devastating sorrows, he had also moments of extreme happiness. The cheerful years, from 1811 to his brother Tom's increasing illness in the early Spring of

1818, must not be counted out when we consider the sum total of his life.

One of the voluntary tasks which Keats had undertaken before leaving school was a written translation of Virgil's *Æneid*. This he finished at Edmonton. Probably the work took him some years to get through, for when he was, Clarke thinks, "mayhap under fourteen," he had hazarded to his friend the opinion that beneath all the incidental attractiveness of the *Æneid*, there was a feebleness in its structure. "The expression," says Clarke, "riveted my surprise," as well it might, coming from a boy. This is the first evidence of Keats's critical faculty on record. In after years, his critical judgment proved that, had he lived, he would probably have been one of the foremost critics in English literature. But, as is usually the case, his critical faculty developed more slowly than his poetical; and even when, later, his criticisms on work not his own were shrewd and sure, he was apt to go astray where he himself was concerned. Only toward the very end was he able to apply to his own work the seeing eye with which he regarded that of others.

Long before he left school, Keats had exhausted the resources of the school library and formed the habit of borrowing from the private stock of the good-natured Clarke. The influence of Clarke was invaluable to Keats. Eight years his senior, Clarke was ahead of him in knowledge of books and literary appreciation. Clarke was a very generous and enthusiastic fellow, full of sympathy for Keats's pursuits, and indefatigable in following his own. He tells us himself that he would often walk the twelve miles to Covent Garden Theatre to see Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth or Queen Constance, or her brother, John Kemble, as Coriolanus or Brutus, and, walking home again in the middle of the night, consider his evening well worth the twenty-four mile tramp. When Edmund Kean burst upon the London stage, his excitement knew no bounds;

it was he who impregnated Keats with his immense enthusiasm for that remarkable actor.

Among other things which Clarke lent to Keats were successive numbers of Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, to which his father, John Clarke, was a regular subscriber. The *Examiner* was liberal in its politics, and literary in its interests. Whatever Hunt's faults, his writing was of the kind which reads itself. The paper must have been singularly attractive to Keats, who doubtless swallowed its opinions whole; Clarke says that it, and Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, "no doubt laid the foundation of his love of civil and religious liberty." Clarke tells an amusing tale in this connection. It seems that Keats once told him, smiling, that Abbey, on asking what books Clarke was lending to him, declared that "if he had fifty children he would not send one of them to that school." But it speaks not badly for Abbey that, although his patriotic sensibilities were outraged, he made no attempt to discourage Keats's intimacy with Clarke; nevertheless, this knowledge may have hastened his removal of George and Tom from the dangerous atmosphere.

That Keats missed the school and Clarke, goes without saying. Luckily Edmonton was only a little over two miles from Enfield, a distance easily accomplished on an off afternoon, with plenty of time left for a visit before he had to start back. Clarke states that he used to walk over five or six times a month, and he always came either with a book to read, or one he had finished and wanted to exchange for another. Here, in the arbour at the end of the garden, the two young fellows would sit, and talk, and read. They read Shakespeare. Clarke recollects that once when reading *Cymbeline* aloud Keats's eyes filled with tears and his voice shook in the passage where Imogen, after the departure of Posthumus, says that she would have watched him

"... 'till the diminution
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle,
Nay, follow'd him, till he had *melted from*
*The smallness of a gnat to air*, and then
Have turn'd mine eye and wept."

The italics are Clarke's, and show that Keats must have been especially struck by this particular expression, proving a literary instinct already on the alert even through the emotion which the purely human side of the passage evoked in him.

On one occasion, when, Clarke thinks, Keats "may have been sixteen years old" — they were, he remembers perfectly, in the old arbour — Clarke read aloud Spenser's *Epithalamium*. Keats's "features and exclamations were ecstatic," declares Clarke. "How often, in after-times, have I heard him quote these lines:

'Behold, while she before the altar stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,
And blesses her with his two happy hands,
How the red roses flush up to her cheeks!
And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain,
Like crimson dyed in grain,
That even the angels, which continually
About the sacred altar do remain,
Forget their service and about her fly,
Oft peeping in her face, that seems more fair,
The more they on it stare;
But her sad eyes, still fasten'd on the ground,
Are governèd with goodly modesty,
That suffers not one look to glance awry,
Which may let in a little thought unsound.'"

That night Keats took back with him to Edmonton the first volume of the *Faerie Queene*, and he went through it, Clarke told Lord Houghton, "as a young horse would through a spring meadow — ramping."

What, in any individual case, starts a poet writing?

That would be an interesting inquiry, if there were means to answer it in a sufficient number of cases to make the question worth while. Granted the faculty to be lying in wait, what, in the majority of poets, is the one touch needed to set it going in words? Clearly, in Keats's case, the answer is — the reading of Spenser. The result was the lines, *Imitation of Spenser*. Brown told Lord Houghton that the poem was the earliest one Keats was known to have written. Brown probably got this from Keats himself. Keats may, of course, have tried his hand at something before, but the fact that he included the *Imitation* in his first volume, and left out so many poems that succeeded it, proves that he had conceived a special affection for it and that this affection was shared by his brothers also. A first poem is simply a wonder, a miracle, to a young poet, and the young poet's friends and family. Apart, therefore, from Brown's statement, we can believe that it was his first attempt by the evidence of its preservation, for its fate was greater than it deserved. It is, in truth, a pretty feeble thing; a fragment of poetical copy, marvelous to Keats and his brothers because neither he nor they knew that he had it in him to do even that, but with little other interest. Of course he viewed it with partial eyes, but not so partial as to show it to the eight-years-older Clarke. To us, who are not partial, it contains one good passage, that in which Keats describes the island:

> "It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen
> Of the bright waters."

As a poem, it is characteristic only in a certain sensuous delight in picture.

The truth is that Keats learnt to write poetry very slowly and unsteadily. His was no precocious talent. It took him a long time to learn what not to do, for he shows his genius in being over luxuriant from the start, with almost every worst fault which a poet can be heir to. Even when he

began to get his bearings and write the poetry which has made his fame, he was often guilty, at one and the same moment, of pieces of so weak and sentimental a kind that one wonders how, with the power to write the first, he could possibly have been able to write the others. Truly, to study Keats is to be baffled again and again. But we must not forget that the strange interest which the man inspires has caused all his failures to be brought into notice; a cruelty which no other poet has suffered to a like extent.

We can imagine with what speed Keats rushed up to London to show his *Imitation* to his brothers. Brown dates the poem two years later than Clarke, when Keats was eighteen, not sixteen; but it does not make a pennyworth of difference at which age he wrote it, for it seems to have been the first of his poems of which we are cognizant, at any rate.

We know very little about these apprentice years, except what Clarke can tell us. One of the boys at the Clarke school, Richard Hengist Horne — the subsequent author of *Orion*, but known chiefly as the friend and correspondent of Mrs. Browning and the editor of two volumes of her letters — remembers an amusing little incident.[1] It seems that one day, when Mr. Hammond was called professionally to the school, Keats was left outside to look after the horse and gig. Horne had come to the school after Keats's departure, but tales of Keats's prowess as a fighter still lingered there, and Horne, peeking at him as he sat in the gig, was dared by the other fellows to snowball the "old boy." No decent youngster will take a dare, but Horne seems to have let fly from behind, which was not too bold of him. He hit Keats squarely in the back and then took to his heels before Keats could jump out of the gig and catch him.

We cannot suppose that the apprenticeship was all plain sailing. In a letter, written in 1819, speaking of the renewal of the tissues every seven years, Keats remarks:

[1] Buxton Forman.

"This is not the same hand which seven years ago clenched itself at Hammond." It was within a year of his beginning his work at the surgery that he was moved to shake his fist at his master, according to that, but nothing seems to have come of the episode. Perhaps the gesture was made behind the doctor's back; perhaps it was a gunpowder flash of temper which the wise doctor thought best to ignore. Keats, with his mind on poetry, cannot have been a perfectly satisfactory assistant, but neither can a young man of his brains and sense of justice have been an altogether unsatisfactory one. We may conjecture that the jealousy of a less intelligent co-worker, about whose early years no one was making inquiry, prompted the remarks of his brother apprentice to the effect that "he was an idle loafing fellow, always writing poetry."

The Enfield school was not the only place to which Keats resorted on his days out. He got into the very natural habit of running up to London to see his brothers. I say "brothers," because Tom had joined George in Mr. Abbey's employ before Keats left Edmonton, although just when, we do not know. George, sociable fellow that he was, had made friends in London; among them, the family of a deceased naval officer named Wylie. There was Mrs. Wylie, a daughter Georgiana, and two sons. Georgiana Wylie was a very remarkable woman. She was only a child of eleven at this time, however, but George Keats seems to have fallen in love with her at a very early date. The steadiness of George's career cannot be entirely imputed to his character. Unlike his brothers, he had an anchor in his love for Miss Wylie. To her, then, we can ascribe most of the happiness and good fortune which the family was to know. Her effect upon George, and the consequent effect upon John, cannot be over-estimated. George had also become intimate with another family of well-to-do tradespeople named Mathew. In this family were two daughters, Caroline and Anne, who brought in

their train a cousin, George Felton Mathew. Keats naturally inherited these friends from George, and saw a great deal of them whenever he was in town. George Felton Mathew quickly became his most intimate friend after Cowden Clarke.

The outings in London probably included various jaunts to public resorts. Sir Sidney Colvin states that Keats's second known poem, written in August, 1814, *Fill for me a Brimming Bowl*, was written to a lady seen at Vauxhall. This fact he gets from the Woodhouse transcript in Lord Crewe's collection, although he does not explicitly say so; but in the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan collection, where the poem is copied twice, there is no mention of it.

*Fill for me a Brimming Bowl* is a singularly poor poem, far poorer than the *Imitation of Spenser*. It is only interesting as being in the octosyllabic metre afterwards employed in *Fancy*, *Bards of Passion*, and the *Eve of St. Mark*.

The reading continued with unabated ardour, but exactly what it consisted of besides Shakespeare and Spenser, we can only guess. Probably the Elizabethans and Milton played the greatest part in it. But there were modern poets who must have claimed his attention. Wordsworth's *Poems*, as we have seen, came out when he was only twelve, but we know that he was familiar with them; the first two cantos of Byron's *Childe Harold* appeared in 1812, and his *Giaour* and *Bride of Abydos* in 1813. Keats was too much of a poet to be impressed by Walter Scott's ballads, but Wordsworth's *Excursion* interested him profoundly.

All this time, Keats had been living with Mr. Hammond, but his grandmother's house was in the same street, the house he had known as home for so many years. Mrs. Jennings was getting very old, but her kindness and affection must have always made a ready welcome for John, and his little sister Fanny was there too, whenever he felt inclined to run over and play with her. Keats never seems

to have had much interest in children, the few he encountered are referred to chiefly as bothering him by their noisy playing; but then, he was never intimate with them. Fanny Keats he evidently loved devotedly. George Keats, writing to his sister in 1825, refers to "times which I expect you have almost forgotten, when we lived with our grandmother at Edmonton, and John, Tom and myself were always devising plans to amuse you, jealous lest you should prefer either of us to the others." The Keats children were extraordinarily fond of one another. Although his grandmother was very old and his sister very young, the Church Street house was a home, and the last Keats was ever to know. Now, in December, 1814, Mrs. Jennings died, and was buried at St. Stephen's, Colman Street, on December nineteenth. This changed everything. Fanny Keats went to live with the Abbeys at their house in Marsh Street, Walthamstow, and Keats found himself alone in a town full of memories for him which must have made his virtual solitude at Mr. Hammond's even more lonely.

The immediate effect of his grandmother's death was a poem, consisting of two quatrains, entitled simply *On Death*. It is a pathetic little piece, of no merit poetically, but it shows real feeling as distinguished from the mere effort to "write poetry" evident in the *Imitation* and the *Brimming Bowl*. For the first time, Keats gets himself into a poem. There is no artificiality here; this is plain, untaught emotion. As the poem is very little known, I will quote it, for it gives the first expression to a side of Keats that we should never forget, the side which suffered, and questioned, and found no answer.

"ON DEATH

I.

Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,
And scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by?
The transient pleasures as a vision seem,
And yet we think the greatest pain's to die.

2.

How strange it is that man on earth should roam,
And lead a life of woe, but not forsake
His rugged path; nor dare he view alone
His future doom which is but to awake."

The boy in Keats is fading, giving place to the man. A certain boyish tenderness is sinking down in him, down where he can rarely come at it. Tender he will always be, but as a man is tender. The boy's clinging tenderness goes, with the realization that the older generation who loved and cherished him is gone. His grandmother may have meant little to him in the last years, but she was a symbol, something that was his, a chain to hold and sustain him, something that gave him roots and reasons beyond his understanding. Now he sees himself the oldest of the family, with only younger brothers to support him. It is as if his whole past had suddenly been chopped away, leaving him swinging in the air with no natural connection with anything. Abbey is nothing, worse than nothing. He is that odious thing, a governor without affection, a ruler without sympathy, an absolute master with no tie of blood to make obedience appear just. Keats would be less lonely if he were all alone, with merely his brothers. Abbey's is a mock paternity, and Keats hates the relation with his whole soul. We can suppose that Mrs. Jennings made a sort of buffer between the two; without her, they must inevitably grind upon each other until the end. Abbey's indifference to everything Keats cares for is to the younger man an intolerable burden. Edmonton, the surgery, Hammond — all become suddenly unbearable. He simply must be near his brothers and feel them near him as a kind of poultice to his jangling nerves. For the second time in his life he craves a change of scene and activity. But how can he persuade Abbey to let him break his indentures? So he sets to work at his poetry harder than he has ever done before.

Keats was always a student of his art, so it is quite natural to find that the poem immediately following on the simple quatrains he used to express his very real sorrow in the lines, *On Death*, should be couched in sonnet form. It is addressed *To Byron*. Lord Houghton dates the sonnet simply "December, 1814," but one line in it proves it to have been written after Mrs. Jennings's death:

> "O'ershadowing sorrow doth not make thee less
> Delightful."

The lonely boy of nineteen found a solace in Byron which the greater poets of his real admiration could not, at the moment, give him. To us, Byron is the supreme poet of irony; to his contemporaries, particularly his youthful contemporaries, he was the very rapture of divining sympathy. His touch was both wound and healing, an intimate connection joining soul with brother soul. Keats grew to rate Byron at a true valuation, but we need not expect to find him at nineteen so very different from other young men of his time. The sonnet shows that he fairly soaked in Byron at this period. He was having a hard time, and Byron helped him over it, so the better for Byron. We, knowing Keats's later opinion, may smile a little as we read, but, understanding the circumstances, the smile, I think, will not be very broad; and, although Keats was quite serious in his attitude, and was surprisingly unconscious of any ironic intent, there is good criticism in the last two lines of the sonnet, a criticism which he would have hotly denied at the time, but which stands, nevertheless, in the backhanded fashion which Keats never meant. The lines are:

> "Still warble, dying swan! still tell the tale
> The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe."

We should note in passing the lines:

"As when a cloud the golden moon doth veil,
Its sides are ting'd with a resplendent glow,
Through the dark robe oft amber rays prevail,
And like fair veins in sable marble show."

So early did the moon take possession of Keats's poetry. This passage proves that already Keats had learnt how to see. Cloudy moonlight is a difficult thing to get into verse, and Keats does not quite succeed with it here. But he knows the effect he is trying for, his attempted picture is the product of keen observation. In the expression, "shining beamily," we see Keats already employing what is to become one of the chief elements of his own peculiar idiom.

As a first attempt at a sonnet, *To Byron* is not bad. To be sure, the octave runs directly into the sestet, and the poem is all of a piece without the oblique changes of direction between the two sections which make the charm of a sonnet. But it is a fairly successful performance technically, on the whole. It will be observed that the sonnet follows the Petrarchan form.

Still another poem, a sonnet entitled *On Peace*, may possibly belong to 1814, although it is quite likely to have been written as late as the Summer of 1815. As there is a doubt as to its exact date, I have put it as the last of the 1814 sonnets, although I am certain it was not written then. It must, I think, belong either to the Summer of 1814, or the Summer of 1815, for it is clearly written either after Napoleon's banishment to Elba, or after Waterloo. It would be interesting to know which, for, in the former case, it would precede *To Byron*, and be the first sonnet by Keats of which we have cognizance. It is evidently a set piece, and from the type of expression in it I am inclined to place it after Waterloo, in the early Summer of 1815. It is quite unimportant, except for the fact that it stands as an essay, and the sole essay, in the Shakespearian sonnet form attempted by Keats, at least so far as we know, before 1818;

but still it is here to prove that he had tried his hand at the form very early in his writing life. The octave of the sonnet is perfectly Shakespearian; the sestet is bastard. The first line of it rhymes with the last line of the octave. The sestet rhymes A.A.B.A.B.B. One might almost suppose the poem to be an experiment, but at this period Keats was not experimenting beyond already existing forms, writing within them was still too much of an experiment as it was.

I shall make some study of Keats's employment of the sonnet a little later on. But now, when he had written only two (supposing the poem to have been written in 1814), such a study seems out of place. It will easily be seen that, whenever it was written, it was not written in December, 1814, for it is quite out of key with his mood at that time.

Since, from this point on, the story of Keats's life and the story of his poems run parallel, I must explain here one of the chief sources of much in both narrative and criticism which will be new to my readers. There is in the possession of Mr. J. P. Morgan, of New York, a large bound volume of manuscripts. The greater part of the volume consists of letters, written to either Woodhouse or Taylor. These letters are not transcripts, but original holographs, and none of them is from Keats. The latter half of the book is given up to transcripts of poems by Keats and others, copied by Woodhouse. This last section is headed, in Woodhouse's handwriting: "Poems, &c. by, or relating to, John Keats. All that are not by Keats, have the names of the authors added. R. Woodhouse, Nov. 1818. Temple." The volume had an ambitious purpose, for later in it Woodhouse says:

> "There is a great degree of reality about all that Keats writes: and there must be allusions to particular circumstances, in his poems: which would add to their beauty and interest, if properly understood. — To arrest some few of these circumstances, and bring them to view in connection with the poetic notice of them, is one of the objects of this

collection — and of the observations — as it is of the notes in the interleaved copies of his published works. R. D. W."

Woodhouse's high opinion of Keats is shown by his adding the following note:

"How valuable would such notes be to Shakespeare's sonnets, which teem with allusions to his life, & its circumstances, his age, his loves, his patrons, etc.'

Unfortunately Woodhouse makes not a few mistakes. In one place, after copying a poem, he is obliged to add "Keats said this day that he did not write this poem." In other places he has evidently confused his poems and the information relating to them, as in a sonnet, *The Poet*, where he states, as he does to several of the poems, "This song was written at the request of some young ladies who were tired of singing the words printed with the air and desired fresh words to the same tune." As the sonnet form could not possibly have been sung to the sort of "air" current at the time, or, I believe, at any time, Woodhouse has evidently connected a note belonging to one poem with another. In other instances, more authentic information shows us that the dates appended to the poems are wrong. In the valentine and sonnet which we know to have been addressed to Georgiana Wylie, he states that the young lady's name was "Miss Mary F." although, under the date of February, 1819, he says, "He this day said they both related to the same person." We can only suppose that Keats, while telling him that the first was written as a valentine for George to send, purposely misled him as to the name out of delicacy. It will be seen, then, that Woodhouse's information must be weighed carefully before it is accepted as gospel. There are quite a number of poems in the book to which Woodhouse appends the author's names, but which, for one reason or another, he has thought fit to copy. For this reason, I am quite sure that Professor de Sélincourt

is wrong in thinking that *Stay, Ruby-Breasted Warbler, Stay* must be by John Keats and not George simply because it appears in one of Woodhouse's volumes of transcripts. A commentator must walk charily in the midst of such confusion, and temper faith with criticism. I have unhesitatingly adopted two hitherto unpublished poems as being without doubt by Keats; another, of which I am doubtful, I have relegated to an appendix; a fifth I have rejected as impossible for Keats to have written, although it may very well be by Reynolds. We must not, however, under-rate Woodhouse's very valuable information because of occasional inaccuracies. I only wish to point out that he is not, in all things, infallible. A few selections from this volume, notably the list of Keats's books, were copied and sent to Sir Sidney Colvin, but the bulk of the volume has never before been read. Through the courtesy of Mr. Morgan, and the kindness of his very able librarian, Miss Belle da Costa Greene, I have been permitted not only to examine the book, but to transcribe it in full. It has been most interesting to find the answers to certain letters in this book in my own collection. The result of the two records is a fuller story of various events in Keats's life than it has been possible to give hitherto.

Woodhouse puts 1815 as the date for the sonnet *To Chatterton*, and I think we shall not be wrong in attributing it to early in the year. The state of mind in which Keats then was, must have made Chatterton, after Byron and for a different reason, very sympathetic reading. In the first place, Chatterton was young and unfortunate, and he was much more unfortunate than Keats could imagine himself to be, which was comforting. The Bristol merchants thought little of him; Abbey had no opinion of Keats, at least of that side of Keats which mattered in his own eyes. Chatterton ached for London just as Keats was doing. Then, too, Keats had an innate love for the age of chivalry. Tales of knights and ladies never lost their charm for him,

from the moment when he encountered them in Spenser to the last year before he left England, when he was reading the old Spanish romance, *Palmerin of England*. But, after all, I think it was more Chatterton himself and his unhappy fate which produced the sonnet than the Rowley poems, although these had a considerable effect on Keats, a greater effect than they deserve probably.

Boys of nineteen do not mourn forever, and it need not surprise us that in February Keats was moved to write a poem *To Hope*. A very youthful poem is this, but a pleasant one. Keats does so enjoy writing it, and is so pleased with the varying refrain which ends each of his stanzas. In the second stanza his beloved moon is brought in as comforter:

> "Whene'er I wander, at the fall of night,
> Where woven boughs shut out the moon's bright ray,
> Should sad Despondency my musings fright,
> And frown, to drive fair Cheerfulness away,
> Peep with the moon-beams through the leafy roof,
> And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof."

Beginning with himself, the poem ends with a bombastic invocation to liberty, in the good, old, stilted, eighteenth century manner. Keats is trying all the styles with a positively childish ardour. On account of the beginning of the poem, when Keats's quondam gloom still overshadows him, I am inclined to put *To Hope* before the sonnet *Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison*, although that event occurred on the second of February , 1815. *To Hope* was printed in the *Poems*, 1817, and there dated, "February, 1815." There is really no reason why the two poems should not have been written on the same day, or *To Hope* may have been written on the first. Keats clearly works himself into complete writing cue before the end of the poem, finishing in a mood quite other from that in which he began, and, after the sonnet to Hunt, is in such fine

fettle that he decides the latter poem good enough to show to Clarke.

Keats had been feeding upon Hunt in the pages of Hunt's paper, the *Examiner*, for some years, as we have seen. In March, 1812, the Hunt brothers, Leigh and John, had published a violent diatribe against the Prince Regent, for which "libel" they were tried, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, Leigh Hunt in Horsemonger Lane Prison, John Hunt in Pentonville, and fined a thousand pounds. This treatment, of course, made martyrs of them in the eyes of their followers, and of these, in his own estimation, was John Keats. Keats did not dig very far into the causes and effects of the case, doubtless. He simply glowed with indignation at this infringement of the rights of free speech in the case of a citizen who wrote so pleasantly as Hunt. The two years over and Hunt once more a free man, Keats wrote a sonnet and dashed off with it to find Clarke. Clarke was also a follower of Leigh Hunt and a friend as well, and on this particular occasion, which Professor de Sélincourt dates as February third, he was walking up to London to congratulate the beloved martyr on his liberation. Keats met him on the way, and turned back with him. "At the last field-gate, when taking leave," says Clarke, "he gave me the sonnet. . . How clearly do I recall the conscious look and hesitation with which he offered it!" Clarke feels quite certain that this was the first evidence he had that Keats was writing poetry. He only says "feels," but as the knowledge made such an impression upon him, his assumption is probably quite correct.

And what of the sonnet? Nothing, I fear. It is a feeble sonnet. The putting of Spenser and Milton into the poem is interesting, and particularly the adding of Hunt to the party in the lines:

> "To regions of his own his genius true
> Took happy flights."

Spenser, Milton, and Hunt on an equality opens a wide door to Keats's point of view at the time.

The next poem which Keats wrote, also in February, was the somewhat pretentious *Ode to Apollo*. It is a long and very dull poem, as he evidently knew, for he did not print it in his *Poems*. He must have scrapped it in his mind, for, as Woodhouse points out, the expression "laurel'd peers," in stanza four, is used again in the sonnet: *To my Brother George*.

In the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library is an unpublished poem, which, as it is only partially dated, I have been obliged to place. From all the evidence procurable, it seems likely that the poem was written in May, 1815. Hunt's liberation had aroused Keats to a fine fervour of patriotism, the new patriotism which denounced "Minions of Grandeur," in the words of the Leigh Hunt sonnet. The bells ringing the anniversary of Charles II's restoration went against Keats's grain, and out came this little burst of indignation:

[1] "LINES WRITTEN ON 29 MAY — THE ANNIVERSARY OF CHARLES'S RESTORATION — ON HEARING THE BELLS RINGING.

Infatuate Britons, while you still proclaim
His memory, your direst, foulest shame?
Nor patriots revere?
Oh! while I hear each traitorous lying bell,
'Tis gallant Sydney's, Russel's, Vane's sad knell,
That pains my wounded ear."

The question marks seem oddly out of place, but I copy the transcript. The poem needs no comment. It is a boyish effusion, but all in line with Keats's attitude in these early years.

It is largely these *Lines on Charles II's Restoration* which incline me to believe that the sonnet *On Peace* was written in June, 1815, immediately after the Battle of

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

Waterloo. During the whole Spring, Keats seems to have been much agitated politically, and the Battle of Waterloo was a subject not easy to let pass unsignalized by a budding poet. *On Peace* is more advised in treatment than the *Imitation of Spenser*, or *Fill for me a Brimming Bowl*, which, if *On Peace* were written in the Summer of 1814, were the only poems which had preceded it. The chief reason for supposing it to belong to 1814 is the clumsy mismanagement of the sonnet form, but against that is the plausible conjecture that Keats, having by the Summer of 1815 tried his hand at two Petrarchan sonnets, was impelled to attempt the Shakespearian. I think, however, that this is flimsy evidence balanced against the known preoccupation of Keats's mind with politics in the latter year.

What is worth remarking in these poems is Keats's growing tendency to write. He delights in using his pen. Young poets usually begin with expressions of personal emotion, but with Keats the mere act of composing seems to have been all the emotion he needed. So far, the only lines he has written not prompted by anything save the giving vent to feeling are those *On Death*. Everything is grist to his mill, and everything is literary. He loved poetry as an art, and forgot himself in its creation. Teeming with emotion of one kind or another as he always was, when he sat down to give it expression the artist took charge of his pen, which, in the final count, is why he is so great a poet. The mark of the minor poet is that he can never forget himself; the proof of greatness lies just in the fact that the artist transcends the man.

When Keats published his *Poems*, 1817, immediately after the dedication appeared this notice:

> "The Short Pieces in the middle of the Book, as well as some of the Sonnets, were written at an earlier period than the rest of the Poems."

Months appeared ages in those days, as, with the exception of the *Imitation of Spenser*, the earliest of the "short pieces," *To Hope*, was written only twenty-two months before the latest poems, *Sleep and Poetry* and the sonnet *To Kosciusko*. But when one is growing up hand over fist, and changing almost over night, two years is a veritable age.

Four of these short poems evidently belong to the Summer or early Autumn of 1815. One is a sequence of three sonnets, without a title, addressed to "Woman!" carefully generalized. It is a juvenile production which needs no farther characterization. Two others, in the tripping metre of Thomas Moore, whose *Irish Melodies*, published in 1807, were very much the fashion, are mere jingles snapped off to a catchy tune. In them we see a boy having a good time making rhymes for a couple of silly girls. These girls were the Misses Mathew already referred to. How silly they were, can be seen by the following account given by Sir Sidney Colvin:

> [1] "One of the sisters, asked in later life for her recollections of the time, replied in a weariful strain of evangelical penitence for the frivolities of those days, and found nothing more to the purpose to say of Keats than this: — 'I cannot go further than say that I always thought he had a very beautiful countenance and was very warm and enthusiastic in his character. He wrote a great deal of poetry at our house but I do not recollect whether I ever had any of it, I certainly have none now; Anne had many pieces of his.'"

By which we observe that Anne was more attractive than Caroline. The poems are entitled respectively *To Some Ladies*, and *On Receiving a Curious Shell and a Copy of Verses*. The Mathew family, including the cousin, George Felton, were at Hastings, and from thence sent Keats "a copy of Tom Moore's 'Golden Chain,' and a most beau-

[1] Colvin.

tiful Dome shaped shell," to quote from a transcript of the poem by George Keats. Why Keats reprinted these poems in his book, as he did, can only be answered by remembering how very immature he was, and that Moore's poems were liked by Hunt. Yet even Hunt could not stomach these nerveless copies of a type of verse which, in Moore's hands, was not without charm. In his review of the 1817 volume in the *Examiner*, he admits that these earlier poems "might have been omitted, especially the string of magistrate-interrogations about a shell and a copy of verses."

Shells and poetry books were not the only presents which Keats received from young ladies. Whether it was the Misses Mathew or some other friend whose name we have never heard who sent him a laurel crown for fun, there is no means of finding out, but a poem, entitled *To a young Lady who sent me a Laurel Crown* seems to belong to this year. It certainly does not refer to the laurel crowning at Leigh Hunt's, which took place about a year later. The *Hymn to Apollo* usually printed immediately after it, Woodhouse definitely states[1] to have been written after the laurel crowning at Hunt's. Woodhouse calls it *Ode to Apollo*, which puzzled me until I discovered that, in the first Woodhouse Commonplace Book,[2] it was copied under the title *Fragment of an Ode to Apollo*. So, gradually, as the years go on and new manuscripts and transcripts are recovered, we are enabled to place more and more poems where they rightfully belong.

To return to the *Laurel Crown* sonnet. Evidently Keats had been in one of his gloomy fits the night before it was written, and had poured out his disgust, or distrust, or forebodings, to the lady to whom it was addressed. This attitude of the night before is the chief reason which leads me to place the poem before his going to London, although I admit it possible that it may have been written in

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.
[2] Owned by Sir Sidney Colvin.

November when he was in the mood which brought out the *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*. The earlier date seems more likely, however, for to sally forth hunting laurel on a chill November day does not commend itself to reason, and do florists keep laurel handily by for the emergency of genius? That the sonnet was not written during his first weeks in London, the whole tone of it declares. Whoever wove the wreath, it was a pretty gesture to rally Keats's spirits and stir his sick ambition with it. And the ruse succeeded, as the sonnet shows. It is much more virile than any other of these very early poems, and written with his delightful mocking humour, the first evidence of it in verse. There is a nice bravado about it, and none of the saccharine sentimentality which marks his serious poems of the period. We can imagine it to have been written after some bout with Abbey, in which the misguided and much tried guardian had undertaken to give a little "advice" about not wasting one's time scribbling. The lady's pin-prick worked, Keats gets himself together with a jerk and exclaims:

> "Lo! who dares say, 'Do this?' Who dares call down
> My will from its high purpose? Who say, 'Stand,'
> Or 'Go?' This mighty moment I would frown
> On abject Cæsars — not the stoutest band
> Of mailed heroes should tear off my crown;
> Yet would I kneel and kiss thy gentle hand."

This is not the way Keats writes to Caroline and Anne Mathew. We like this girl, but who was she? Her action is quite in character with Georgiana Wylie, but that young lady was only thirteen. We, who love John Keats, salute you, wise and witty incognita, you gave him courage to do farther battle with Mr. Cæsar Abbey.

Success is to the strong, and Keats, thus nerved, persevered and won. Somehow, by specious arguments or obstinate resistance, he at last persuaded Abbey that he should do better by studying in London than by remaining

with Mr. Hammond for the final year of his apprenticeship. Hammond does not seem to have made any objection to the indentures being broken, and it was by common agreement between Abbey, Hammond, and Keats, that, some time in September probably, the latter packed up his clothes, his prize books and what others he had been able to acquire, and his slim bundle of manuscripts, and set off for London to walk the hospitals.

## CHAPTER II

### LONDON AND POETRY

It needs no stretch of the imagination to picture the state of Keats's mind during the eight miles to London on that September day. Did he walk, and leave his precious portmanteau to be sent on by wagon, or did he ride up to town on the top of the coach with the portmanteau safely stowed away in the boot? Historically speaking, the journey is a blank. But whether he walked, or spanked along behind four lively horses to the tune of jingling harness and the guard's busy horn, even supposing that it rained cats and dogs and the drops trickled down his neck, we know very well that his spirits were bubbling over with excitement, that he felt exactly like a knight of romance starting forth in quest of high adventure in the green forest. He was free of Hammond, thank God! He was nobody's apprentice, but a free man, and in another year he would be his own man, come of age and out of Abbey's jurisdiction. But, in all this, not a thought of abandoning his profession seems to have occurred to him. Poetry was his avocation, but his vocation was surgery, and he had every intention of sticking to it. A man can have a religion by which he lives and yet go about his daily work. Keats's attitude toward poetry was a good deal like this. He fed on it in his heart, he intended to devote all his leisure time to it, but his job was to become an apothecary and surgeon, and so ingrained was the idea that he does not, at this period, seem to have questioned it.

His first business on reaching London must have been to find a lodging. George and Tom were living at Mr. Abbey's at 4 Pancras Lane. Abbey seems to have lodged some of his employees at his business quarters, and to have had rooms there for himself and his family also which they

occupied from time to time; usually, however, he lived at Walthamstow, coming in to town every day in true suburban fashion. There appears to have been no thought of Keats's joining his brothers in Pancras Lane. The hospitals at which he proposed to study, Guy's and St. Thomas's, which in those days were united, were on the other side of the river, in Southwark. Keats found a lodging near them, at 8 Dean Street, Borough. He was not in love with the Borough. In a letter, written somewhat later to Clarke, he describes it as "a beastly place in dirt, turnings, and windings." Dean Street was the first turning to the right after crossing London Bridge, and the house was "nearly opposite a meeting." So there we have it as it showed itself to Keats, and we must agree with him that the spot was not alluring.

There is every reason to suppose that Keats took a week or so to look about and settle down before presenting himself at the hospital. We can imagine him knocking up all his acquaintance, and more especially frequenting the Mathew family, who seem to have attracted him greatly just at this time, an attraction which quickly died down, for after the first year or so we hear nothing more of them. The first of October, however, saw him entered as a student at Guy's.

The various registers of Guy's hospital contain these records: First: "Oct. 1, 1815. John Keats (no 57) 6 Mo[nths]. Place of education, Mr. T. Hammond, Edmonton. Office fee £1.2s." Under the entry: "Dressers of the Surgeons, Guy's Hospital," beside the heading, "Pupil," appears: "Oct. 2. 1815. John Keats. (Mr. L.) $\frac{6}{12}$ Mo[nths]." On this occasion, he paid a fee of £25.4s. On October 29, 1815, is entered: "Mr. Jno. Keats had returned to him £6.6s, he becoming a dresser." A final entry reads as follows: "Entered, March 3, 1816, John Keats. Under whom: Mr. L. Time: 12 mo[nths]. Whence they come: From Edmonton. S. Office. £1.1s.od." October first, 1815, was a Sunday,

which accounts for the fact that Keats was merely entered on the books on that day, and his assignment to a particular surgeon not made until the next day, Monday.

The death blow to the surgical career of John Keats is contained in the modest little parenthetical legend "(Mr. L.)." For Mr. Lucas was clearly not the man to inspire a rather half-hearted assistant with enthusiasm. John Flint South, a well-known surgeon, who was a contemporary of Keats's and a pupil at Guy's at the same period, has described Lucas very vividly:

> [1] "A tall ungainly awkward man, with stooping shoulders and a shuffling walk, as deaf as a post, not overburdened with brains, but very good-natured and easy, and liked by every one. His surgical acquirements were very small, his operations generally badly performed, and accompanied with much bungling, if not worse."

Had Keats the good fortune to have been appointed dresser to the very magnetic, lightning-minded, and enthusiastic Astley Cooper, not yet a baronet, his interest in his work would have been augmented tenfold. He worked hard, as is shown by a note-book[2] on his courses of anatomy and surgery. The notes are full and explicit. Little drawings appear occasionally among them, a flower or two absent-mindedly jotted down, probably when the lecturer grew dull or diffuse, but there is nothing odd in that.

The life of a medical student, particularly when he is also something very nearly corresponding to an "intern" in our modern hospitals, is an arduous and fatiguing one. Keats had longed to come to London, but he had had no idea what he was coming to, or how the city would affect him. He had not realized how much harder he would have to work, attending lectures, dissecting specimens, and assisting at operations, than he had ever been obliged to do at Mr. Hammond's. His courses consisted of two on anat-

[1] Feltoe's *Memories of J. F. South.* [2] Dilke Collection.

omy and physiology, two on the theory and practice of medicine, two on chemistry, and one on *materia medica.*

At first, we can believe that the excitement of being a grown man living in lodgings was extremely agreeable. Nothing is more assuring to youth than the possession of a latch-key, but the delight soon wears off. London in Autumn is not a cheery place, and Keats was in a very dingy quarter. A man who has tramped up and down stairs from ward to lecture-room and back again, hour after hour; who has patiently followed his surgeon on his rounds, and made others alone, shuddering with a new responsibility; who comes home, dog-tired, to a cold grate and hideous, shabby furniture, with pages of notes to digest and more walking to a chop-house to get his dinner; such a man, if he wants all his energy to write poetry and has never lived away from trees and fields before, cannot be expected to keep his spirits always at concert pitch. Keats, in fact, became a little homesick, and more than a little lonely. Add to this the discouraging realization that there was no home to be homesick for. He must have thought often of the days when his mother was always ready to comfort and sympathize with him. A mother is a woman, and a motherless boy mixes up his longings for his mother with his general need of a woman's tenderness. He may not put it so to himself, but that is the fact. Keats never got over his need for a mother; and we must never forget this salient trait in his character. He was always seeking to fill up a void in his life of which he was only half aware. He tried to fill this emptiness with friendship, with love for his brothers, but man cannot take the place of woman to another man. One of the many reasons for Keats's failure in his relations with Fanny Brawne was that he sought in her a mother as well as a lover, and she had not yet grown up enough to stand to him in both capacities. But I anticipate. All I wish to point out here is that his very loneliness, the empty room where he found things just as he had left them,

the door opening to chilly silence, all this, operating on his adolescence without its usual corrective, the composing of poetry, caused him to speculate a little, ever so little, on the idea of woman and her possibilities to man. It was only a sort of moon-calf attitude, and not entirely unexperienced before — witness the sonnet sequence I have mentioned as probably written during this Summer. The idea was a bit twinging at times, that was all, but we find it creeping into his poetry. A boy of twenty who never speculates about love would be a monster unknown to Nature. Indeed, Keats's early poems are rather remarkable for the absence of love in them. That side of him took a long while to mature. It is loneliness which brings it out now, and its expression is wistfully cool, if I may so express it.

In the short, dreary November days, Keats wrote a sonnet. All that I have been saying is to be found in it, and as it is one of the least known of his poems, I will give it here:

"O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep, —
Nature's observatory — whence the dell,
Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
'Mongst boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.
But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd,
Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee."

"The highest bliss of human-kind" — but he had never experienced it, poor boy! The kindred spirit had no existence in reality.

In spite of the anatomy, and chemistry, and *materia medica*, Keats had found time to solace his longing for fields and trees and brooks by reading Wordsworth, for

Keats's wild bee in a foxglove bell comes straight out of Wordsworth's sonnet on the sonnet, in his *Poems*, 1807:

> "... bees that soar for bloom,
> High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,
> Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells."

In the *Solitude* sonnet, Keats is lonely, but he is not absolutely discouraged. By the time the next poem was written, he was beginning to find how very badly his vocation and his avocation jibed. It took the form of an *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*. We have seen that Mathew was, at the moment, his most congenial friend. Mathew was a reader and, what was very alluring to Keats, dabbled in verse. Keats had a hunger for literary companionship, and Mathew supplied the best to be had at the moment. His merit as a poet was singularly small, but Keats, who lived so much in books, had, by a natural process of idealization, raised it into a considerable talent, and decided that they two were destined for a poetical brotherhood akin to that of Beaumont and Fletcher.

Keats's burrowings had somehow led him to the not-too-well-known poems of Michael Drayton, a copy of one of Smethwick's editions of Drayton's *Poems* is listed in the catalogue [1] of the books in his possession at the time of his death. That Drayton influenced him a great deal, we shall see over and over again. The epistle was a favourite Elizabethan form, it is true, but Drayton's epistles were probably those which made the greatest impression on Keats.[2] The fact that Drayton wrote epistles in verse to his intimate friends and fellow poets, Henry Reynolds, George Sandys, William Brown, and William Drummond of Hawthornden, must have been peculiarly intriguing to

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Library.

[2] *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney. A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in the Division of Modern Languages of Harvard University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. April, 1922.

Keats, in whom poetry and friendship were so closely allied. It required only a slight effort of the imagination, and a little youthful blindness, to work Mathew up to the rôle of worthy recipient.

The opening lines of Drayton's *Epistle to Henry Reynolds* are:

> "My dearly loved friend, how oft have we,
> In winter euenings (meaning to be free,)
> To some well chosen place vs'd to retire,
> And there with moderate meats and wine and fire,
> Haue past the howres contentedly with chat,
> Now talk'd of this, and then discours'd of that,
> Spoke our owne verses 'twixt ourselues; if not,
> Other men's lines, which we by chance had got,
> Or some Stage pieces famous long before,
> Of which your happy memory had store."

Keats's *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* begins in this wise:

> "Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong,
> And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song;
> Nor can remembrance, Mathew! bring to view
> A fate more pleasing, a delight more true
> Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd,
> Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd
> To raise a trophy to the drama's muses.
> The thought of this great partnership diffuses
> Over the genius loving heart, a feeling
> Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing."

The Beaumont and Fletcher note is struck at the outset, and there is also a very distinct resemblance to the tone of Drayton's poem. The Drayton parallel is even more exact a little farther on, where Keats says:

> ". . . O Mathew lend thy aid
> To find a place where I may greet the maid —
> Where we may soft humanity put on,
> And sit, and rhyme, and think on Chatterton."

The "maid" is, of course, the poetic muse, and the gist of the poem is that Keats finds his surroundings and occupations inimical to the writing of poetry. Apparently Mathew is in no such difficult situation, for Keats exclaims:

> "... fain would I follow thee
> Past each horizon of fine poesy;
> . . . . .
> But 'tis impossible, far different cares
> Beckon me sternly from soft 'Lydian airs,'
> And hold my faculties so long in thrall,
> That I am oft in doubt whether at all
> I shall again see Phœbus in the morning:
> Or flush'd Aurora in the roseate dawning!
> Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream;
> Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam;
> Or again witness what with thee I've seen,
> The dew by fairy feet swept from the green,
> After a night of some quaint jubilee
> Which every elf and fay had come to see:
> When bright processions took their airy march
> Beneath the curved moon's triumphal arch."

The last line of the passage is the finest he had yet written on the moon. But, indeed, the whole poem is an advance in poetical description over anything done before. Immediately after this passage comes the second misery which gnaws at his aching mind:

> "But might I now each passing moment give
> To the coy muse, with me she would not live
> In this dark city."

There is the rub, the "dark city." The lack of time is a great drawback, but the city hangs over him like a pall. Yet his very fighting against it turns up by contrast scenes and moments that he remembers, places that make one want to write, where thought is the outcome of environment. It is the old story of frustrated longing and the

vividness of baffled recollection. Poking about in his imagination, Keats finds a spot

> "Where the dark leav'd laburnam's drooping clusters
> Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres,
> And intertwin'd the cassia's arms unite,
> With its own drooping buds, but very white.
> Where on one side are covert branches hung,
> 'Mong which the nightingales have always sung
> In leafy quiet: where to pry, aloof,
> Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof,
> Would be to find where violet beds were nestling,
> And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling."

At the very moment, then, when Keats says he cannot write, we find him writing better than he ever has before. Which is not so strange a paradox in poetry as it might appear. "I have nothing to say," exclaims the poet, "I am dry, empty, drained of all emotion and utterly useless," and at once proceeds to write things of the greatest importance to mankind. Keats follows the usual line of march very closely, and with the usual ignorance that he is doing so.

The poem is interesting as showing his familiar reading at the time. He wants to talk to Mathew, not only about Chatterton, but about Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare, Milton, and Burns, to say nothing of the beloved *Examiner* and its opinions in his desire to discourse "Of those who in the cause of freedom fell," choosing as examples, King Arthur, William Tell, and William Wallace. Lacking such scenes and such conversation, how is it possible for him to write:

> "Felton! without incitements such as these
> How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease:
> For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace
> And make 'a sunshine in a shady place.'" [1]

[1] Spenser's *Faerie Queene.*

Mathew is the chosen of Diana (her first appearance in Keats's poetry, by the way), he is destined for great things, and Keats waxes literary and a thought dull in depicting what Mathew may be expected to do some day, and which, of course, he never did.

Yet, notwithstanding that it is, on the whole, the best poem Keats had yet written, the note of discouragement in it is only too evident, and the discouragement is based upon incontrovertible fact. There was no time. It was a gruelling thing to work at medicine as he was doing and be in a constant fever to practise his ever increasing gift of poetry. No wonder he felt driven and at his wits' end. Mathew, who knew the circumstances, took serious alarm. He sat down and wrote Keats a series of verses[1] which, poor enough though they be, have a value quite apart from their merit.

The first two stanzas run:

"Oh thou, who delightest in fanciful song,
And tellest strange tales of the elf, of the fay;
Of giants tyrannic, whose talismans strong
Have powers to charm the fair ladies astray.

Of courteous knights, of high-mettled steeds,
Of forests enchanted and marvelous streams,
Of bridges, and castles, and desperate deeds,
Of magical curses, and fair ladies' screams."

In this tone, the poem continues, until Mathew begins to assure his friend that his gift is not due to his being in any particular place: "It is not the climate, nor nature around," to which Keats owes "the song that thou lovest to sing":

"Oh! no, 'tis the Queen of those regions of air,
The gay fields of fancy thy spirit has bless'd;
She cherish'd thy childhood with fostering care
And nurtured her Boy with the milk of her breast."

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

Evidently the friends had decided that the moon was Keats's tutelary goddess, which, in good sooth, she was, all through his early years.

The most important part of the poem to us is the last two stanzas:

"When evening shall free thee from Nature's decays,
And free thee from studies severest controul,
Oh! warm thee in Fancy's enlivening rays,
And wash the dark spots of disease from thy soul.

Oh! let not the spirit of poesy sleep;
Of fairies and Genie continue to tell;
Nor suffer the innocent deer's timid leap
The wild bee to fright from her flowery bell."

Woodhouse remarks that the first and last lines of the penultimate stanza refer to "Keats's then profession of surgeon," and that the last two lines of the last stanza are an allusion to the *Sonnet to Solitude*. These last two lines are exactly what lead me to place the sonnet before the *Epistle*, and the *Epistle* is specifically dated in the *Poems* 1817, "November, 1815." Woodhouse thinks that these verses of Mathew's were in answer to the poem about the shell sent Keats by his (Mathew's) cousins, but despite their Tom Moore metre, they are so obviously an answer to the *Epistle*, that I am quite sure that Woodhouse is in error in considering them as a reply to the earlier poem. The *Sonnet to Solitude* is clearly written from London, because of the reference to the "murky buildings," and as Keats did not reach London until late September, and was not out of humour with his surroundings until some weeks later, as fogs are the product of Autumn and Winter, and "murky" undoubtedly a synonym for "foggy," and as people are not picking up shells at the seaside on November days, it seems quite certain that the shell was sent some months previous to the writing of the sonnet, and that therefore, if Mathew's poem were an answer to the shell

verses, it could not have contained an allusion to the sonnet. What the fairy tales were of which Mathew speaks, we can have no idea. Either they have perished, or they existed merely in conversation, or they are a heightened allusion to the shell poem. For it seems extremely unlikely that the *Induction* and *Calidore* were even conceived in 1815, and, although knights and ladies appear in them, there are no fairies, nor giants, nor "genie." The *Sonnet to Solitude* and the *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* make a perfect sequence of emotion placed in this new order, which, after much cogitation, I believe to be the right one.

By this time, Keats's old friend, Cowden Clarke, was also in London. Clarke says that he cannot remember the precise time when he and Keats separated, nor which of the two first went to London. But it was while Keats was living in Dean Street that he discovered that Clarke was with his brother-in-law, a Mr. Towers, in Warner Street, Clerkenwell. The earliest of Keats's letters which has come down to us is the one written from Dean Street to Clarke, containing the description of the Borough which I have quoted. The return of Clarke upon the scene probably dimmed Mathew's lustre not a little. Mathew's chief attraction for Keats must have been that he wrote poetry, for, as far as sheer sympathy is concerned, Keats had abundance of that from his brothers. The innumerable transcripts of John's poems by both George and Tom prove their enthusiasm as nothing else could.

Not even the brilliant lectures of Astley Cooper could wean Keats from poetry. But he must have seemed to the great doctor as not in the best frame of mind for study. Probably Astley Cooper knew nothing of his preoccupation with studies other than medical, probably what he saw was a young fellow with marked ability working under that ass, Lucas, who had no idea how to bring out his latent powers. The boy needed contact with his profession out of hours, he needed some fillip to bring him into the

ring, as it were. How could Astley Cooper know that the whole College of Surgeons were as nothing against that native bias which led Keats unerringly toward his destiny. They were a puff of mist obscuring a crimson sunrise, that was all. Keats himself had no inkling of the truth, he tried to take an interest in his hospital work, and was very likely grateful when Astley Cooper recommended him to the care of his own dresser, George Cooper. If Astley Cooper suggested that his assistant should actually take Keats under his wing, we are not told, but evidently George Cooper decided that Keats would whip into shape better if he were moved out of his solitary lodging. Whether the initial suggestion of the change came from him, or from Keats, it was undoubtedly pure kindness of heart on Cooper's part which led to Keats's removal to the lodgings which Cooper shared with two other medical students, a certain George Wilson Mackereth, and one Henry Stephens, the latter well known in after years as the inventor and proprietor of an excellent ink. For posterity, whatever fame he may have gained as a surgeon has been blotted out by the greater fame of his ink, but with that we have no concern here. These young men had rooms over the shop of a tallow-chandler in St. Thomas's Street.

The proposal seems to have met with the approval of all concerned. Keats was a very sociable fellow in these early years, and very popular with all and sundry. Everyone had liked him at school, he was a delightful companion and sensitive to the rights of others. The faculty of getting on with people was one of his very marked qualities. When the removal to St. Thomas's Street took place is not certain, but it was probably in either December 1815 or January 1816.

Sir Sidney Colvin quotes a long account of Keats at this time, written by his fellow medical student, Henry Stephens. The passage, Sir Sidney states, is made up of extracts from papers in the Houghton collection and re-

miniscences of Stephens's conversation by Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson published in the *Asclepiad*. Although these remarks are not to be believed in too blindly, being long-after remembrances by a man who appears quite incapable of understanding Keats, they are the best picture of Keats's student days which we have, and we know that Keats thought well enough of Stephens to look him up in 1818 when passing through Redbourne, where Stephens was then living, on his way to Liverpool. I quote the passage with a few omissions:

> [1] "Whether it was in the latter part of the year 1815 or the early part of the year 1816 that my acquaintance with John Keats commenced I cannot say. We were both students at the united hospitals of St. Thomas's and Guy's, and we had apartments in a house in St. Thomas's Street, kept by a decent respectable woman of the name of Mitchell [2] I think . . . John Keats, being alone, and to avoid the expense of having a sitting-room to himself, asked to join us, which we readily acceded to. We were therefore constant companions . . . His passion if I may so call it, for poetry was soon manifested. He attended lectures and went through the usual routine but he had no desire to excel in that pursuit . . . He was called by his fellow students 'little Keats,' being at his full growth no more than five feet high . . . In a room, he was always at the window, peering into space, so that the window-seat was spoken of by his comrades as Keats's place . . . In the lecture room he seemed to sit apart and to be absorbed in something else, as if the subject suggested thoughts to him which were not practically connected with it. He was often in the subject and out of it, in a dreamy way.
>
> He never attached much consequence to his own studies in medicine, and indeed looked upon the medical career as the career by which to live in a workaday world, without being certain that he could keep up the strain of it. He nevertheless had a consciousness of his own

[1] Colvin.

[2] Another account gives the name as Markham. Colvin.

powers, and even of his own greatness, though it might never be recognized . . . Poetry was to his mind the zenith of all his aspirations: the only thing worthy the attention of superior minds: so he thought: all other pursuits were mean and tame. He had no idea of fame or greatness but as it was connected with the pursuits of poetry, or the attainment of poetical excellence. The greatest men in the world were the poets and to rank among them was the chief object of his ambition. It may readily be imagined that this feeling was accompanied with a good deal of pride and conceit, and that amongst mere medical students he would walk and talk as one of the Gods might be supposed to do when mingling with mortals. This pride exposed him, as may be readily imagined, to occasional ridicule, and some mortification.

Having a taste and liking for poetry myself, though at that time but little cultivated, he regarded me as something a little superior to the rest, and would gratify himself frequently by showing me some lines of his writing, or some new idea which he had struck out. We had frequent conversation on the merits of particular poets, but our tastes did not agree. He was a great admirer of Spenser, his 'Faerie Queene' was a great favourite with him. Byron was also in favour, Pope he maintained was no poet, only a versifier. He was fond of imagery, the most trifling similes appeared to please him. Sometimes I ventured to show him some lines which I had written, but I always had the mortification of hearing them condemned, indeed he seemed to think it presumption in me to attempt to tread along the same pathway as himself at however humble a distance.

He had two brothers, who visited him frequently, and they worshipped him. They seemed to think their brother John was to be exalted and to exalt the family name . . .

Whilst attending lectures he would sit and, instead of copying out the lecture, would often scribble doggrel rhymes among the notes of Lecture, particularly if he got hold of another student's syllabus. In my syllabus of chemical lectures he scribbled many lines on the paper cover. This cover has long been torn off, except one

small piece on which is the following fragment of doggrel rhyme: —

> 'Give me women, wine and snuff
> Until I cry out, "hold! enough."
> You may do so, sans objection,
> Until the day of resurrection.'

. . . He was gentlemanly in his manners and when he condescended to talk upon other subjects he was agreeable and intelligent. He was quick and apt at learning, when he chose to give his attention to any subject. He was a steady quiet and well behaved person, never inclined to pursuits of a low or vicious character."

I have omitted a reference to a young man named Newmarch who, Stephens insists, ridiculed Keats's poetry and made broad fun of his brothers for their admiration of it. The reason for my omission is that I do not believe in the existence of Newmarch. Stephens says that "he came often" having formerly been intimate with Keats. But Keats was the last man in the world to permit anyone who was rude to his brothers to come even once again. A man who has been the best fighter of a school for years does not suffer himself to be the object of "mortifying" tactics, such as Henry Stephens declares Newmarch's were. I feel very sure that Stephens is either thinking of some one else, or has mistaken his facts. The portrait of Keats, however, if we remember that we are seeing it through Stephens's eyes, is very vivid and illuminating. It was a good trick to write his nonsense in somebody else's note-book; the one of his own which we know is properly and seriously kept. Keats was always full of fun, a somewhat rollicking fun at times. But what a likable fellow he was! Who cares for his arrogance? Arrogance is inevitable when a young man is head and shoulders above his comrades. Keats did not study, and he did not listen to lectures, therefore how could he learn? That was the itching question these embryo medicos asked themselves, and it was not a little galling to

them that he did learn. The attitude can be plainly read between the lines of Stephens's memoir, and it appears again in the communication of another student who says,[1] "even in the lecture room of St. Thomas's I have seen Keats in a deep poetic dream; his mind was on Parnassus with the Muses." As evidence of this, he gives the *Alexander Fragment*,[2] that odd little tale, written in a Chattertonian attempt at Middle-English, which may have come from here, there, or anywhere, and is chiefly interesting for the first mention we know of the great blowing pine, Milton's "tallest pine hewn on Norwegian hills," which creeps into Keats's poems on more than one occasion. Probably Sir Sidney Colvin is right in conjecturing that G. L. Way's translation of Le Grand's *Fabliaux ou Contes*, published in 1800, is the chief source of the tale. Keats's interest in Chatterton gives the language, while his combined spirits of experiment and mischief give the tone and the place of composition. There is a great deal about Alexander in the *Historical Library* of Diodorus Siculus, which Keats certainly read during either 1816 or 1817, as we shall presently see, but no Indian maid. The worthy Way produces her, however, neatly clad in couplets:

> "At the first glance all dreams of conquest fade
> And the first thought is of his Indian maid."

The whole fragment is plainly a joke, and a joke which the dreams in Dean Street amply account for.

It does not seem as though the experiment of lodging with Cooper, Mackereth, and Stephens can have been altogether successful, yet we have no word that it was not. All youngsters are more or less one-ideaed; doubtless the young medical gentlemen preferred to talk their own particular shop to that which was fast becoming Keats's. Keats worked at surgery because it was his business to do so, but he evidently did not care to talk about it. He

[1] Colvin.
[2] Quoted in full in Sir Sidney Colvin's *Life of John Keats*.

seems to have performed his duties as dresser satisfactorily, but he never got to the point of taking an interest in science. We have no record of his having been caught indulging in any scientific curiosity. I have a strong feeling that, had he lived, this would have come. Keats was keenly intelligent, and, after all, science and art are only the slightly sundered halves of a whole. They may be likened to the octave and sestet of a sonnet, obliquely different in attack, but related by a common emotion. Also, there are his speculations on the effects of different kinds of soil on health, set forth in a letter to Taylor, written from Winchester in 1819. But at the time he lodged in St. Thomas's Street, scientific research was a task to be got through as quickly as possible and then forgotten. We must remember, too, that Keats could command more stimulating intercourse than that provided by Messrs. Cooper, Stephens, and Co., and this they may have resented. It speaks much for the sweetness of Keats's disposition that, in spite of so many reasons why he and the others should quarrel, they do not seem to have done so. They lived together for nearly a year and appear to have parted, if without regret, at least in perfect amity and good will.

There is something pathetic and prophetic in the vision of "little Keats," perched on the window-seat of the sitting-room which was only one quarter his, peering through the window into space. It calls up the thought of a caged animal, or a bird; we are irresistibly reminded of Sterne's starling, repeating over and over, "I can't get out." But we must not make the mistake of supposing that Keats gave an impression of pathos to his friends. He was much too full of life for that, and they were far less likely to look for causes and effects beneath a surface than we are today.

It is the biographer's business to pry beneath surfaces, and pathos lurks behind Keats's words and actions too plainly and too constantly to be ignored. But I must

caution my readers not to let a knowledge of what was to come hide for them what, at any given present, was — at least in appearance.

Mrs. Meynell has very wisely deplored[1] the fact that to most people the accounts of Keats's last days and death have overshadowed his life. This should not be. A man's life is more important than his death. Keats's life was short, but he lived it with enormous zest and avidity. Brown, in a letter to Fanny Brawne[2] written in 1829, already sees this danger:

> "Leigh Hunt's account[3] of him is worse than disappointing. I cannot bear it; it seems as if Hunt was so impressed by his illness, that he had utterly forgotten him in health. This is a great mistake."

What sort of an impression did Keats make upon his contemporaries? We have seen what a not very sympathetic fellow-student has to say. Now let us go farther and find out what kind of idea he left in the mind of his fellow "genius loving heart," his co-partner in the "brotherhood of song," George Felton Mathew. Mathew is writing thirty years after the event, and we shall probably not be wrong in thinking that the verses I have quoted represent a more contemporary judgment. Still we can glean not a little from Mathew's account, one thing being the why of Keats's drifting away from him. The priggish egotism he reveals shows him to have been a true blood cousin to the egregious Caroline. He may not have been such a silly fellow in 1816, but the germs of it must have been in him. He writes:

> [4] "Keats and I though about the same age, and both inclined to literature, were in many respects as different as two individuals could be. He enjoyed good health — a fine flow of animal spirits — was fond of company — could amuse himself admirably with the frivolities of life

[1] *Keats Memorial Volume.* [2] Dilke Collection. [3] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt. 1828. [4] Colvin.

— and had great confidence in himself. I, on the other hand was languid and melancholy — fond of repose — thoughtful beyond my years — and diffident to the last degree. But I always delighted in administering to the happiness of others: and being one of a large family, it pleased me much to see him and his brother George enjoy themselves so much at our little domestic concerts and dances . . . He was of the skeptical and republican school. An advocate for the innovations which were making progress in his time. A faultfinder with everything established. I, on the contrary, hated controversy and dispute — dreaded discord and disorder — loved the institutions of my country . . . But I respected Keats's opinions, because they were sincere — refrained from subjects on which we differed, and only asked him to concede with me the imperfections of human knowledge, and the fallibility of human judgement: while he, on his part, would often express regret on finding that he had given pain or annoyance by opposing with ridicule or asperity the opinions of others."

This is certainly Keats, in spite of the blue goggles of a middle-aged Mathew, struggling under the combined loads of an infinitesimal income and twelve children. There are things here that we must make fast in our minds: Keats was as healthy as any one need be — his spirits were of the liveliest — he liked company, and frankly enjoyed all the small pleasures which came in his way — he was full of confidence in himself. But even Mathew saw farther:

"A painter or a sculptor might have taken him for a study after the Greek masters, and given him 'a station like the herald Mercury, new-lighted on some heaven-kissing hill.'"

Yet Mathew was shrewd:

[1] "The eye of Keats was more critical than tender and so was his mind: he admired more the external decoration

[1] *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, by Richard Monckton Milnes. (Lord Houghton.)

> than felt the deep emotions of the Muse. He delighted in leading you through the mazes of elaborate description, but was less conscious of the sublime and the pathetic. He used to spend many evenings in reading to me, but I never observed the tears in his eyes nor the broken voice which are indications of extreme sensibility. These indeed were not the parts of poetry which he took pleasure in pointing out."

This is at direct variance with Clarke's account of the effect which a passage of *Cymbeline* had on him, as we shall do well to remember. Keats was always much moved by the great moments of poetry, but I do not think we need find these two opinions contradictory. When Mathew knew him, Keats was several years older than when he and Clarke read *Cymbeline* together in the arbour at Enfield. Keats had probably learnt a measure of self-control in the interval, and what he permitted himself to do with Clarke, he very likely carefully avoided doing with the less sympathetic Mathew. Mathew's sensibility appears to have been of the kind which abuses expression, and nothing is so dampening to real feeling as its over-pronounced simulacrum.

But we know that Keats loved imagery, even Stephens saw that, and he loved description. He delighted in pictures made out of words, and he adored the words themselves. Lord Houghton says:

> "If he met with a word anywhere in an old writer that took his fancy he inserted it in his verse on the first opportunity."

What did Keats look like? Like "Mercury on a heaven-kissing hill" says Mathew, and we need not smile, for I think there is more than a touch of truth in the suggestion. Keats must have been a singularly attractive young man. He was very short (five feet and three quarters of an inch, Severn meticulously states), but broad-shouldered and

athletic in build, with a good strong face and a very firm mouth. It is foolish to wonder whether this or that portrait resembles him, for there is, in the National Portrait Gallery, London, a life-mask which must look exactly like him. The face of the mask is, of course, in repose, and the hair is covered, but the features are there, and the mask is in excellent condition, or was, when I saw it twenty years ago. In thinking of Keats, one should think always of the life-mask and eschew all the pathetic caricatures which Severn, in his life-long devotion, never ceased to produce. A single one of these adoring and unable portraits seems, in comparison with the mask, in the least like, and that is the sketch made during one of the long night watches of Keats's last illness. There Severn rose beyond himself into real tenderness and truth. Two silhouettes, cut by Brown, are, I believe, excellent likenesses; they give something of the strength and buoyancy which the Severn portraits lack. And there is much to be learnt from a little-known source. This is the large, abortive painting of *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*,[1] by B. R. Haydon. Haydon, following the custom of the old masters, introduced the heads of various of his friends and acquaintances among the attendant crowd, Keats's included. Hazlitt says that the head of Wordsworth was the most like of these portraits, and certainly the one of Keats reproduces neither the shape of his head nor the form of his features, but it does give a fire, and life, and verve, which is to be found nowhere else. The young man in the crowd is shouting with excitement, and looking at him one catches a spark of Keats's vivacity at certain moments, of which all his friends speak. His face was evidently one which lit up to an extraordinary degree under emotion. To know what Keats looked like, this picture must be taken into account. But certainly the most important portrait of Keats (next to Severn's sketch made during his last illness) is the recently discovered

[1] Now in the Cincinnati Art Museum.

drawing by Brown,[1] sent from New Zealand by his granddaughter to Sir Sidney Colvin and given by him to the National Portrait Gallery, London. Done at Shanklin, when Keats was already ill, it is sterner and quieter than the silhouettes. The man in the drawing is tired, but it is the fatigue of indomitable mental and moral strength. Brown was not a professional portrait painter, but he knew Keats in his last years as no one else except Fanny Brawne knew him. The features are those of the life-mask, the feeling of the drawing in perfect harmony with all we know of Keats. The discovery of this picture is of the utmost importance, adding so much as it does to our knowledge of Keats's appearance.

There has been a great deal of discussion as to the colour of Keats's hair. Evidently the word "red" had a comic connotation in the ears of his contemporaries. They have called it everything but its true colour. Only Mrs. George Keats, characteristically sensible, clear, and honest, gives its real colour. In her copy of Lord Houghton's *Life*, opposite the description of Keats's appearance, she wrote:[2] "His eyes were dark brown, large, soft, and expressive, and his hair a golden red." That this is the exact colour can be easily proved. There are locks of Keats's hair in the Dilke, Morgan, and Day collections. The Morgan Library possesses the least faded of these, and the colour is simply marvelous. Such a red I think I never saw before, no words can exactly describe it. It is lighter than the shade known as "Titian red," yet with no suggestion of the hue called "carrot." A red sunset comes nearest to the colour. The man with such glorious hair must have been striking in the extreme.

Keats's eyes were extremely brilliant, they impressed everyone. Mrs. Procter wrote that they appeared to her "as those of one who had been looking on some glorious

[1] See Frontispiece to Vol. II.

[2] *Letters and Poems of John Keats*, edited by John Gilmer Speed.

sight"; Bailey bears witness to their "fiery brightness"; Severn speaks of the "eagle" appearance of Keats at times, and says he could never forget the "wine-like lustre" of his eyes. That, despite their brilliance, they were never metallic, Mrs. George Keats's words testify. Bailey also says that "the form of his head was like that of a fine Greek statue: — and he realized to my mind the youthful Apollo, more than any head of a living man whom I have known." We can see, from all this, that Keats lacked only height to be a man of very remarkable beauty. He seems never to have given his looks a thought, except to realize, rather bitterly, that he was very short. In a letter to Bailey, written in 1818, in which he discusses his attitude toward women, he says: "After all I do think better of womankind than to suppose they care whether Mister John Keats five feet high likes them or not."

We have seen Keats under various aspects indoors, but to see him outdoors we must turn to Severn. It takes an artist's perception to notice certain things, and luckily for us an artist was at hand. In Mr. William Sharp's biography of Severn, is a delightful description of Keats on holiday, compiled from Severn's notes:

> [1] "Severn was astonished by his companion's faculty of observation. Nothing seemed to escape him, the song of a bird and the undernotes of response from covert or hedge, the rustle of some animal, the changing of the green and brown lights and furtive shadows, the motions of the wind — just how it took certain tall flowers and plants — and the wayfaring of the clouds: even the features and gestures of passing tramps . . . the furtive animalism below the deceptive humanity in many of the vagrants, even the hats, clothes, shoes, wherever these conveyed the remotest hint as to the real self of the wearer . . . Certain things affected him extremely particularly when 'a wave was billowing through a tree,' as he described the uplifting surge of air among swaying masses of chestnut or oak

[1] *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

> foliage or when, afar off, he heard the wind coming across woodlands. 'The tide! the tide!' he would cry delightedly, and spring on to some stile, or upon the low bough of a wayside tree, and watch the passage of the wind upon the meadow-grasses or young corn, not stirring till the flow of air was all around him, while an expression of rapture made his eyes gleam and his face glow."

He loved to watch the wind running upon a field of barley. "From fields of oats or barley," Severn declared once, "it was almost impossible to allure him." Unlike Mathew, who does not seem to have noticed them, Severn remarks upon Keats's rapid changes of mood:

> "Even when in a mood of joyous observance with flow of happy spirits, he would suddenly become taciturn, not because he was tired, not even because his mind was suddenly wrought to some bewitching vision, but from a profound disquiet which he could not or would not explain . . . The only thing that would bring Keats out of one of his fits of seeming gloomful revery — when he would answer with cold, almost harsh brevity, or not at all, although his eyes would have no hardness . . . was the motion 'of the inland sea' he loved so well."

Keats's temperament was rather a difficult one to manage — for its possessor, I mean. That, in spite of the dashes of chilly gloom which swept over him on occasions, he should have been such a pleasant companion, shows how very hard he tried to hold on to himself. If, when he was enduring one of his blue fits, he answered coldly or not at all, we may be sure that the blithe, shallow, not too tactful Severn brought this on himself by teasing enquiries.

The faculty of observation which Severn remarks upon comes out again and again in his letters. I am almost inclined to call Keats the first of the colour writers, certainly no one before his time was so impressed by pure colour as he. But he had also another sense, the feeling for

line simply as line, witness the interest with which he watched the curve of wind over a grainfield, or the linear bend and recoil of plants in a breeze. However subservient he may have made these things in his poems, thus unconsciously following the trend of his time, it was primarily as themselves that he saw them. Think of the descriptions of scenery in Shelley's letters, for instance; setting aside the manner in which they are written, they are not even observed as a man of to-day would observe them.

Now take Keats: Cowden Clarke tells of his describing a sunset over Loch Lomond, with the lake deep blue and in shadow, and at the further end "a slash across it of deep orange." The last words are quoted from Keats, and illustrate what I mean. His letters are full of such touches. Writing to Tom from Scotland, near Ben Lomond, he says, "The water was a fine Blue silvered and the Mountains a dark purple, the Sun setting aslant behind them." Here we have abundant colour, and the "aslant" gives all his feeling for line. From Winchester, he writes: "From the Hill at the eastern extremity you see a prospect of Streets, and old Buildings mixed up with Trees." That is at once a painter's vision, and a modern's expression. Again: "We went to tea at Mrs. Millar's, and in going were particularly struck with the light and shade through the Gateway at the Horse Guards." The interesting thing here is that it is not the gateway, with its light and shade, which interests him; not the light and shade composed into the picture of a place; but these by themselves, all unrelated, the gateway is subsidiary. He speaks of the sun "coming upon" the snow. Exactly the right expression, but I do not think he would ever have dreamt of using it in a poem; it would not have suited the poetical diction of the age, which even he could not quite shake off. For Keats is much more modern in his letters than in his poems. A man cannot jump a century at one fell swoop, and we know that what he did

do gave the critics ample cause for concern. Think of the passage in *I Stood Tip-toe upon a Little Hill:*

> "... the moon lifting her silver rim
> Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
> Coming into the blue with all her light."

"Gradual swim" is certainly a challenge to posterity. Less modern in expression, but so exact in observation as to be vivid as a thing seen, is

> "The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
> An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
> Along the flat brown sand."

There is perfect realism in his "keen, fitful gusts," or "Small busy flames play through the fresh-laid coals," or

> "The city streets were clean and fair
> From wholesome drench of April rains,"

or "The stars look very cold about the sky." Keats is generally called a romantic, and a romantic he certainly was; but he was also a realist, and that has not been so usually noticed.

How Keats's observation and love for poetry combined, is shown by the passages he marked in the books he read. There are enough books owned by Keats in existence to enable us to follow the workings of his mind very closely. One of these books dates from the period we are considering. It is the first volume of a set of Spenser [1] which came from the library of George Keats. When Keats acquired the book, there is no means of ascertaining. He certainly did not own it at the time he borrowed the *Faerie Queene* from Clarke. The title-page bears the inscription, "George Keats, 1816." John's name does not appear. A hieroglyph in the corner is supposed to be his initials, but I confess I doubt it, as they bear no resemblance to his usual way of

[1] Author's Collection.

writing them. My theory is that John, having fallen in love with Spenser after his reading of Clarke's copy, set about getting a copy for himself as soon as possible, and that, having read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested it, passed it on to George. The volume is heavily underscored in innumerable places,[1] and annotated, evidently by John, since his is the only handwriting which appears in the margin. But this is not the only evidence that the volume was much used by, in fact probably belonged to, John. Mr. James Freeman Clarke, who was Unitarian minister in Louisville from 1833 to 1839, knew George Keats well, and in an article quoted in Buxton Forman's Library Edition he says that George told him that John used this Spenser as a boy. The other five volumes of the set were lost before the descendants of George Keats parted with this one, but in it we have twelve cantos of the *Faerie Queene*. The book has been read and re-read, marked and over-marked. A few of these scored passages will suffice to show how often Keats was attracted by descriptions of colours, by pictures appealing directly to one or more of the senses.

He has underlined:

> "... His glistring Armour made
> A little glooming Light much like a Shade."

Again, he singles out the words "uncouth light," and the last half of the line: "And turning fierce, *her speckled tail advanced*," in which it was evidently the "speckled" which caught his fancy. Another little bit picked out of a stanza is:

> "All in a Kirtle of discolour'd Say
> He clothed was, ypainted full of Eyes."

He has marked the whole of the thirty-fourth stanza of the First Canto, which begins: "A little lowly Hermitage it was." And of course he has singled out the description of

[1] See Appendix C.

Morpheus's bed in stanza forty-one. Among the colour annotations is:

> "Now when the rosy-fingered Morning fair,
> Weary of aged Tithon's saffron Bed,
> Had spread her purple Robe through dewy Air."

And again:

> "A goodly Lady clad in scarlet Red,
> Purfled with Gold and Pearl of rich assay,
> And like a Persian Mitre on her Head
> She wore, with Crowns and Owches garnished,
> The which her lavish Lovers to her gave:
> Her wanton Palfrey was all overspred
> With tinsel Trappings woven like a Wave,
> Whose Bridle rung with golden Bells and Bosses brave."

One picture which he liked was:

> ". . . two goodly Trees, that fair did spred
> Their Arms abroad, with grey Moss over-cast;
> And their green Leaves trembling with every Blast,
> Made a calm Shadow far in compass round."

Shadows always intrigued him; here is another, quite different in shape and effect:

> "Whereas that Pagan proud himself did rest,
> In secret Shadow by a Fountain side."

Happy descriptive epithets charm him. For instance in the two lines:

> "She is ybrought unto a paled Green
> And placed under stately Canopy;"

he has only underlined the first. The "stately canopy" seemed not to call for notice, but he could not resist "paled Green." Remember what I have said of his feeling for realism, and observe that he marked this:

> "When I awoke, and found her place devoid,
> And naught but pressed Grass where she had lyen."

These are visual things, but he has also scored:

"A shrilling Trumpet sounded from on high,"

and again the line:

"With Shaumes, and Trumpets, and with Clarions sweet."

His own lines in the *Eve of St. Agnes:*

"The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide"

is finer than either of these, but probably owes its birth to them. There are other passages which find an echo later in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. Two lines which he has not only underscored, but put three marginal marks against, are:

"Silly old Man, that lives in hidden Cell,
Bidding his Beads all day for his Trespass."

Have we not here an ancestor to the ancient Beadsman? Also he has carefully noticed:

"They bring them wines of Greece, and Araby,
And dainty Spices fetch'd from furthest Ind'."

Keats liked the word "Ind." He has underlined this also:

"As he had travell'd many a Summer's Day,
Through boiling Sands of Araby and Ind'."

He tried his own hand at it in the sonnet *To J. R.*:

"O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
To land each Tuesday from rich Levant!"

The only place in the volume where anything has been written, refers to the following passage, which has not only been underlined throughout, but Keats has drawn two lines beside it and annotated it, "Milton." It runs:

"Great Grace that old Man to him given had;
For God he often saw from Heaven's height.

All were his earthly Eyen both blunt and bad,
And through great Age had lost their kindly Sight,
Yet wondrous quick and pierceant was his Spright,
As Eagle's Eye, that can behold the Sun."

This preoccupation with what I may call "images of effect" he never lost. Some time during 1819 or 1820, probably the former year, Keats borrowed from Taylor a copy of Southey's translation of the old Spanish romance, *Palmerin of England*, and with the charming irresponsibility of the born borrower filled it with appreciative scorings. Through the courtesy of the present owner,[1] I have been enabled, not only to examine, but to transcribe all the passages in the four volumes of *Palmerin*[2] marked by Keats. It is evident from them that his love for certain qualities in literature underwent no change from first to last. Among the passages which he marked are: "a fair and clear river, . . . so clear that whosoever walked on its banks might count the white stones at the bottom." A giant's body tumbling is like the "fall of a tower," which is promptly underscored. Tilting knights come to the ground with their "saddles between their legs." Under trees "there was a delicate shadow, and of such quality and nature, that in the hottest calm of summer they always moved with the wind." In one place, a spire of many-hued tiles is so arranged that "one colour gave beauty to another," which excellent description Keats pounced upon at once. "The waters of the river mournful both in colour and sound" is double scored. He notes the giants on a field of battle "their harnesses and helmets flashing over the field far away, as the sun shone on them." A great many passages describing the colours and devices of armour are marked: "A knight mounted on a mulberry courser" who wears "green armour"; white armour with "golden fruit of the arbutus in a green field on their

[1] Lucius Wilmerding, Esq., of New York. [2] See Appendix C.

shields"; armour "black and yellow with grey griffins thereon"; "armour red, with black joints." Images of effect are by no means the only things which Keats noticed in the books he read, but it is his colour sense and his faculty of observation which I wish to lay stress upon here. Later, when we come to consider Keats's intellectual habit at its full growth, and his attitude toward poetry in general and his own in particular, as well as his method of writing, I shall have occasion to quote scorings and annotations of quite a different character. But side by side with these, to the very end, we may witness his constantly recurring delight in words and phrases which convey a tactile, aural, or visual sensation with the swift economy of genius.

At the beginning of 1816, then, Keats is living in St. Thomas's Street, a conundrum to his fellow-students, a perturbing pleasure to Mathew, a petted protégé to Clarke, a flame-winged phœnix to his brothers, and a jolly good fellow to the rest of his small circle. Since to understand Keats, one must know his friends, I shall stop a moment to consider each as he comes along. Devoted as Keats was to the friends he made, it was usually George who found them for him. "I know not how it is," writes Keats in 1818, "but I have never made any acquaintance of my own — nearly all through your medium, my dear Brother."

I think these Keats boys were rather remarkable young fellows really, and I am leaving genius out of count entirely when I say this. George we know was not a genius, Tom we cannot suppose would have turned out one. Thomas Keats's wish that his sons should rise in the world they realized in every thing they did; in their tastes, points of view, and choice of friends. And they were totally without their father's consciousness in the matter. They moved inevitably from one class to another, because it was in them to do so. A natural refinement characterized all

three of them. They had been to a good school, but that alone would not account for their very genuine simplicity and distinction. It was in them from the start, and probably Thomas Keats and his excitable wife knew in some obscure way that it was in *them*, too, handicapped as they were, to realize their ideals. When Nature sets out to make a gentleman she knows how to do it, no matter what the world may think. James Freeman Clarke, who knew George in middle life, judged him at his true value:

> [1] "He was one of the most intellectual men I ever knew . . . Joined with this energy of intellect was a profound intellectual modesty . . . George Keats was the most manly and self-possessed of men — yet full of inward aspiration and conscious of spiritual needs. There was no hardness in his strong heart, no dogmatism in his energetic intellect, no pride in his self-reliance."

The style of this appreciation is a little high-flown, it was written in 1843 and conforms to the taste of the day, but it clearly proves George Keats to have been an unusual man, and Dr. Clarke was no mean judge of men, the last person in the world to idealize a cypher.

Of Tom Keats, we know very little. He walks like a shadow across his brothers' letters, and we have only four of his own. He was almost always an invalid, with a sweet, affectionate, clinging disposition. Like his brother John, and his mother, he craved affection. George also may have inherited this trait, but in his case the craving was satisfied very early; even now, in 1816, he was surely and steadily falling in love with Georgiana Wylie.

It was probably in the late Autumn of 1815, or very early in the following year, that Keats, through the medium of the hospitable Wylies, met a young man named Haslam, by whom he was introduced to another young

[1] Buxton Forman. Library Edition. Vol. IV. First published in the *Dial*, April, 1843.

man, a painter, Joseph Severn. We know practically nothing about William Haslam, except that he was a few months older than Keats and a solicitor. For some perfectly inexplicable reason, I think of him as a large, burly man, but there is no justification for any such idea. I suppose it comes from the fact that Haslam was such a dependable creature; Severn speaks of him as "our oak friend." It is almost impossible to measure the degree of intimacy between intimate friends. He was one of Keats's inside circle, but not, I think, one of the closest of them. We have only one short letter to him from Keats, but that may be simply because other letters to him are lost. He was a very intimate friend of Severn's, whom he brought to the Wylies' where Keats must often have met him. Haslam's good will was unbounded, he appears to have been willing to do anything, and to have done it well.

Of Severn, there would be almost no need to speak, were it not that certain false notions in regard to him have become current. The fact that he went to Rome with Keats, nursed him during his last illness, and spent the rest of his life painting Keats from memory and talking and writing about him, has given him the position of inseparable companion in the minds of most people. As a matter of fact, until the journey to Italy, he stood in no such relation to Keats. One of the most widely circulated errors of the Keats legend is just this, and it is most important that it should be corrected. Severn also was one of the circle, but several other members of it knew Keats better than he. The great fact of his life was that he, and he alone, had been with Keats during the last terrible months. It is unpleasant to feel, as we must, that although his love was undoubtedly sincere, he made capital of it. It was his only claim to fame. It is true that in the years immediately following Keats's death, when Keats himself had little or no public beyond the boundary of his friends, Severn did his best to champion him; but, as the years went on and

Severn, the painter, saw only too clearly that he was a failure, he tended to rely with ever increasing insistence upon his rôle of Severn, the friend of Keats. In considering Severn's later life, the unpleasant truth is forced upon us that what began as genuine admiration ended as advertisement. He arrogated to himself a place in Keats's life which he never occupied, the accident of illness alone was responsible for a relation which would not have existed otherwise. He knew this, and yet he did everything in his power to foster the legend. Severn was a weak and a vain man, which is all the excuse that he can claim. He did not desert his post in Rome, that is his unique virtue, and that, of course, he knew.

Joseph Severn was the son of a music teacher. He was apprenticed to an engraver, but he had such a desire to paint that, in spite of his father's anger, he managed to attend the Royal Academy schools. Abandoning engraving, he started as a miniature painter, at the same time trying his hand at historical painting. Whatever disappointment and age made of Severn, as a young man he was hard-working and courageous. With practically no money, and only a moiety of tuition, he dared to compete for the Royal Academy's gold medal, offered in 1817 for a painting on some subject taken from Spenser. To get the materials for his picture, he was obliged to sell his watch and books, but when, in December 1819, the competing canvasses were exhibited, he won the medal. From the first, Keats seems to have inspired him to extra exertion. A little shred of justification for his permitting the world to think of him as the *fidus Achates* of Keats, may be found in the fact that he regarded Keats with wondering admiration, and, knowing the warmth of his own feelings, gradually attributed a like warmth to the feelings of Keats. Severn could instruct Keats about pictures; Keats could do the same for him with regard to books. That was the tie between them in 1816. It was Keats's enthusiasm for poetry which led Severn to

choose Hermia and Helena from the *Midsummer Night's Dream* as the subject of his first oil painting, and Keats again whose devotion to the *Faerie Queene* induced him to compete for the Spenser prize. When Severn, struggling to keep going and painting, encountered Keats, the latter's contagious love for all forms of art put new life into him. Severn was impressionable, with a pleasant social gift; he was easy, light, and gay. He never fathomed Keats, but he enjoyed him, and in the sequel came to love him profoundly. Severn seems to have been a little teasing in his demands upon his friend's interest, but as a cicerone to picture galleries and a pointer toward things artistic he was invaluable. Keats liked him, but not to the extent that he liked Keats. He seems to have been one of those unfortunate people who are at once importunate and diffident. Keats's letters to him are always a little cool. George calls him "the complaining Severn," and on one occasion when Severn had been declaring that he feared he was not wanted, he writes to him a little sharply:

> [1] "Have the goodness never to complain again about being forgotten. How many invitations have you received from me? How many have you answered? To the former question may be answered 'a dozen'; to the latter, not one! . . . John will be in town again soon. When he is, I will let you know and repeat my invitation."

On another occasion, George writes:

> [2] "What a most unconscionable fellow you must be for fearing my Brother has forgotten you without knowing the 'how' — and the 'why' — take my assurance he has not."

The attitude on Severn's part which these letters imply is not an endearing one. Yet Severn was honest, and his obvious delight in Keats's company, together with the

[1] *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.
[2] *Ibid.*

admiration he exuded at every pore, was an unpleasant pleasantness. Keats laughed with him, joked with him, took long walks with him, discussed painting and poetry with him, and put him off gently whenever he became a bore. Keats did not see his prize picture, the *Cave of Despair*, until it was hung at the Academy, which does not argue the daily intercourse that Severn in his reminiscences always infers. Yet, even in the reminiscences, Severn gives away his position. He tells how he used to go to Well Walk to finish his miniatures, nominally because he wanted backgrounds for them, but really to be with Keats. "They were my excuse for obtruding my miniature self upon his superior society," are the words in which he makes his confession. Severn was a likeable fellow, but not strong enough intellectually to attract Keats. Keats once told him that he was "the most astonishingly suggestive innocent," a characterization which Severn, panting for crumbs, seems to have regarded as a compliment. It was a compliment up to a point, but no farther. Where Keats was, by turns, in a fury of good spirits or overwhelmed in gloom, Severn was gently playful or querulously miserable. His temperament could not compass the swing of Keats's, poor fellow, and it is one of life's little ironies that Fate should have bound them together. Seymour Kirkup's drawing of Severn,[1] made in 1822, a year after Keats's death, although smoothed and prettified in the artist's best manner, tells us all we need to know. The eyes have a dreamy, and still mildly penetrating, look, but the regular nose and the weak mouth and chin proclaim the sentimentalist. Yet were it not for his careful tending of the legend, it would be pathetic to realize how keenly he gauged the truth in the end. Just before his death, he said to a friend:

> "I may say that of all I have done with brush or pen, as artist and man, scarce anything will long outlast me . . . yet through my beloved Keats I shall be remembered."

[1] *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

I have outstripped chronology, as I see I shall be forced to do again and again. We know more of Keats's friends than Keats did at the time of his meeting them, and by this very knowledge we can follow his relations with them, and their effect upon him, as we could not do otherwise. There are always many influences at work in the growth of a poet, and among the most important are the influence of books and the influence of personal contacts. To study an artist's work is to study his psychology, and that we can only do by concerning ourselves with the objects of his thought. There are men on whom the influence of environment is as potent as these I have mentioned, but such men are rare, and do not belong among the intellectual geniuses. That nature had its hand in the making of Keats, we very well know, but not to the extent of books and people.

The first poem of 1816, so far as we can tell, was the trochaic couplets *To Georgiana Augusta Wylie*, whose name, in the *Poems*, 1817, is represented by asterisks. The printed version is an alteration of a valentine which Keats composed for his brother George to send to his inamorata. The original valentine [1] was far simpler than the poem intended for the public gaze. The whole middle portion, from line 3 to line 34, was added later. For instance, the original lines:

> "Like light in wreathed cloudlets nested
> Thy hair in gilden casque is rested,
> From the which four milky plumes
> Like the fleur de Luce's blooms,
> Springing from an Indian vase."

are much better than those which took their place:

> "Like sunbeams in a cloudlet nested
> Thy locks in knightly casque are rested:
> O'er which bend four milky plumes
> Like the gentle lilly's blooms
> Springing from a costly vase."

[1] Woodhouse Commonplace Books.

"From the which" was, of course, bad, but the greater vividness and circumstantialness of the original cannot be denied. The more artificial character of the printed poem is, we fear, the result of friendly criticism, almost always a hindrance to Keats. It is certainly a horrible taste which permitted the abominable diction of:

> "Saving when, with freshening lave
> Thou dipps't them in the taintless wave."

Keats's indebtedness to Spenser in this poem has been pointed out by Professor de Sélincourt, but I think the verbiage of these two lines comes straight from Pope. Keats rhymes "Thalia" with "higher," which shows how shaky he was on the pronunciation of classical names. Even three years later he was not sure of them. The proof-sheets of *Lamia* contain a list of such names and their pronunciations, written, probably, by Woodhouse, for Keats's guidance. There is no hint in the *Poems*, 1817, that these lines were intended as a valentine, but the original is quite conventionally explicit on the subject, ending with all the frill of laced paper:

> "Ah, me! whither shall I flee?
> Thou hast metamorphosed me:
> Do not let me sigh and pine,
> Prythee be my Valentine!"

That there was much rejoicing in the house of Wylie on St. Valentine's Day, is obvious, and much foolish and delighted praise for the poet.

George availed himself of this Cyrano-like method of wooing again, and the result was the cheerful little bit of twaddle which begins "O Come dearest Emma," a euphemism for Georgiana. This youthful trifle mates Moore's metre and an eighteenth-century diction in a manner to set one's teeth on edge. The last lines are so excruciatingly bad that I think Keats, in his worst moments, never outdid them:

"So smile acquiescence, and give me thy hand,
With love-looking eyes, and with voice sweetly bland."

Doubtless Miss Wylie was pleased, but even Keats knew better than to include the verses in his book. The copy which Georgiana Wylie had, we may feel assured, made no mention of any Emma, instead it probably began: "O Come Georgiana," but as Woodhouse's transcripts read "Emma," I am afraid Keats liked what he had done well enough to hand it round among his friends, although carefully keeping George and Georgiana out of it.

The two recently recovered poems,[1] *Apollo and the Graces*, and *You Say You Love*, probably belong to this same period. Both of them are quite worthless. I unhesitatingly reject *Stay, Ruby-Breasted Warbler, Stay* from the list of Keats's poems. A transcript of the poem made by George Keats is carefully signed "G. K." [2] That Woodhouse was misinformed in attributing this poem to John, seems evident, for it is the height of folly to suppose that George did not know his own poem. *Stay, Ruby-Breasted Warbler* has an interest quite apart from the question of its authorship, because Woodhouse annotates it: "Written off in a few minutes at the request of some ladies who wished for fresh words to sing to their tune," and this leads to the supposition that it is the poem confused with a sonnet, *The Poet*, found in the Morgan Library Woodhouse Book, which bears practically the same inscription.[3] That the *Ruby-Breasted Warbler* was written for the Misses Matthew to sing at their "little domestic concerts" is a guess that we may very well hazard. *Apollo and the Graces* has for sub-title "Written to the tune of the air in 'Don Giovanni,'" which probably places it as owing its existence to another of these occasions. A strange thing, however, is that Woodhouse received *Apollo* and *You Say You Love* from Miss Reynolds,

[1] Woodhouse Commonplace Book. (*Poems II.*) Crewe Collection.
[2] *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt, 4th edition.
[3] See Vol. I, p. 62.

who possessed the originals, which would seem to point to their being treasured in the Keats circle, or written later in the year, for Keats did not meet the Reynolds family until the Autumn of 1816. I am inclined to believe the former of these two alternatives, as Keats was doing so much better work by the Autumn. Still it is a fact that Keats was always prone to lapses in the quality of his poetry, and he is known to have written words to airs played to him on the piano by Charlotte Reynolds. But the particular kind of badness which these poems display so lavishly never appears again; the only song we know definitely to have been written for Charlotte Reynolds is of a totally different calibre.

While we are on the subject of bad poetry, let me mention an undated set of verses, the manuscript of which was given, many years later, by George Keats to John Howard Payne. Payne published them in a New York paper, the *Ladies Companion*, in 1837. They can, I think, belong only to this period. There is no doubt of their authenticity, for I have seen the manuscript.[1] As they have never been reprinted, I insert them here:

"Hither, hither, love —
'Tis a shady mead —
Hither, hither, love!
Let us feed and feed!

Hither, hither, sweet —
'Tis a cowslip bed —
Hither, hither, sweet!
'Tis with dew bespread!

Hither, hither, dear,
By the breath of life,
Hither, hither, dear! —
Be the summer's wife!

[1] Owned by Dr. Roderick Terry, Newport, R.I.

Though one moment's pleasure
In one moment flies —
Though the passion's treasure
In one moment dies; —

Yet it has not passed —
Think how near, how near! —
And while it doth last,
Think how dear, how dear!

Hither, hither, hither
Love its boon has sent —
If I die and wither
I shall die content!"

On March 3rd, as we have already seen by the Guy's Hospital register, Keats put himself down for another twelve months' term of tuition. He does not seem to have changed his surgeon, for again Mr. Lucas appears as his immediate chief. Evidently Keats still considered surgery as his destined profession. But the poetry was going on in a continually increasing flow. In this same March, Keats wrote a sonnet: *On an Engraved Gem of Leander*. Woodhouse [1] says that the "gem" was the gift of Miss Reynolds. This, I am sure, is another of Woodhouse's slips, for the same reason that applies to the two other poems of this period which Woodhouse obtained from her. A letter [2] from the third of the sisters, Charlotte Reynolds, written after Keats's death, may or may not throw some light on the situation. In this letter, Miss Reynolds asks for the return of an album which Woodhouse had taken away in order to write something in it, she also asks Woodhouse to send back a letter of Keats's which he had borrowed. Another letter from a Mrs. "Colonel" Green, whom I suppose to have been the future mother-in-law of Marianne Reynolds, written to Woodhouse [3] in 1819, speaks of her intention to rally Keats upon "a great *mistake*" com-

[1] Houghton Mss. Crewe Collection. Colvin.
[2] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection. [3] *Ibid.*

mitted by him "in the Book of trifles," whatever that may have been. Albums and Books of Trifles point to the preserving of effusions, and Keats may possibly have contributed poems to be copied into these repositories along with the songs written for Charlotte Reynolds to sing. The "gem" which gave rise to the sonnet was undoubtedly one of the innumerable coloured paste reproductions of antique and pseudo-antique cameos and intaglios made by James Tassie, who stole the idea of these reproductions from Wedgwood. Keats was very fond of "Tassie's gems," they keep cropping up in his letters; at one time he even thought of making a collection of them.[1] It is impossible to identify the particular "gem" which produced the sonnet. Tassie's catalogue gives over sixty [2] of which Leander is the subject.

The Leander sonnet is in so entirely different a key from the poems which immediately preceded it, and in so much more advised a diction than anything Keats had previously done, that I confess to a doubt as to whether Woodhouse's date be the correct one. Lord Houghton prints this sonnet after the one *On the Sea* which was written in April, 1817. By that time, Keats knew the Reynoldses well enough for one of them to have given him the "gem," and it would have been quite natural to give him a present when he was starting for the Isle of Wight to begin *Endymion*. Then again why, if the sonnet were written in March, 1816, was it not printed in the *Poems*, 1817? It is quite as good as some of the sonnets printed in that volume. But, lacking more evidence, Woodhouse's definite date must stand.[3] It is not a bad sonnet, in spite of some floridness of wording. It creaks a little with age to-day, but there is a sense of drama which is struck immediately in the dignified opening line:

"Come hither all sweet maidens soberly."

[1] Colvin. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] A holograph of this sonnet in the Bemis Collection is dated "March" and some year, but the last figure of the year date is undecipherable.

The sestet, with Leander's drowning, is full of vivid action.

The sonnet form was especially delightful to Keats in his early years. It held just about as much as he was prepared to say. It was dignified and serious, and he found it, as most poets do, an extremely sympathetic medium. Again during March, Keats wrote another, this time a tribute to all past poets dead and gone. It is not a particularly good poem, but the subject is illuminating. It shows how Keats was haunted by his reading. A fact to which the many "steals" and forgetful borrowings in all his early work vigorously testifies. The sonnet has no title, it is known by its first line, *How many bards gild the lapses of time*. Speaking of them, Keats declares

> "... I could brood
> Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime:
> And often, when I sit me down to rhyme,
> These will in throngs before my mind intrude."

It took him years to get them into the background.

Hunt, in his *Examiner* review of the *Poems*, 1817, criticized the first line of this sonnet for its see-saw rhythm, saying that "by no contrivance of any sort can we prevent this from jumping out of the heroic measure into mere rhymicality." Dr. Robert Bridges, on the other hand, regards "the inversion of the third and fourth stresses as very musical and suitable to the explanatory form of the sentence." The truth is that both of these critics are right. Nothing can prevent the first line from taking on a rhythm utterly unlike the traditional five-stressed iambic rhythm of the sonnet, and in any line but the first this might well have given a musical effect, but not in the first, since the first line of a short poem invariably sets the tune. The merry little lilt of this line starts the sonnet, not only clumsily for a sonnet, but unfortunately in regard to the total effect; it implies an attitude absolutely at variance with the mood of the poem as a whole. Cowden Clarke

remembers [1] that Horace Smith, on hearing the sonnet read aloud by Hunt exclaimed, in reference to the thirteenth line: "What a well-condensed expression for a youth so young!" The thirteenth line is:

"That distance of recognizance bereaves."

Smith's comment is interesting as an illustration of the change of taste which a century has brought about, for it is just this sort of verbal torturing that the modern ear most deplores in Keats, and that he learnt more and more to eschew.

Keats's reading, diversified as it may appear at a casual glance, was really very much along a line. The line was, naturally, poetry, poetry old and new. History, travels, were all so many glosses to the old poetry; since the new needed no glosses, he gave it none. Modern writing, outside of poetry, he seems to have had no interest in. Novels, later than those of Smollett and Fielding, he seldom attempted to read, and when he did, he did not like them. He was, of course, too young to savour the delicate irony of Jane Austen's books, besides being entirely unacquainted with the class of society she portrayed, and the same thing, with differences, applies to Miss Edgeworth; but Scott was just beginning to take the world by storm, everybody was speculating on the identity of the author of these extraordinary romances except Keats. The second of them, *Guy Mannering*, appeared in 1815. Keats did not read it. The *Antiquary* came out in 1816, but although Keats did read it some time, it was probably not until later. He was intrigued with the bluff days preceding his own, and his critical acumen was not to be fooled by Scott's "big bow-wow style," as Scott himself called it. Writing to George Keats in 1818, he gives his reasons for his point of view:

[1] "*Recollections of Writers*," by Charles Cowden Clarke.

> "You ask me what degrees there are between Scott's novels and those of Smollet. They appear to me quite distinct in every particular, more especially in their aim. Scott endeavors to throw so interesting and romantic a colouring into common and low characters as to give them a touch of the sublime. Smollet, on the contrary, pulls down and levels what with other men would continue romance. The grand parts of Scott are within reach of more minds than the finest humours in 'Humphrey Clinker.' I forget whether that fine thing of the Sargeant is Fielding's or Smollet's,[1] but it gives me more pleasure than the whole novel of 'The Antiquary.'"

In other moods, Keats did full justice to Scott's power of interesting the public. In the journal letter to George and his wife, written at intervals from some time in December, 1818, to January 4, 1819, he remarks:

> "We have seen three literary kings in our Time — Scott — Byron — and then the Scotch novels."

This does not, I imagine, mean that Keats thought that Scott, Byron, and the anonymous novelist, were kings of literature in the sense of being head and shoulders above the rest of the contemporary writing world, since the modern writers he cared most for at the time were Coleridge and Wordsworth, but that he considered them as literary kings, their books being more in the public eye than anybody else's. In other words, they had a "corner on literature," and his "literary kings" is analogous to our "coal barons." Scott here is obviously the Scott of *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*, not the author of the "Scotch novels." Something seems to have shaken Keats's belief of the year before that Scott was clearly the mooted author. He, like all the world at the time, vacillated from person to person in the endeavour to hit upon the right man.

If Keats did not read *Guy Mannering* and Miss Austen's *Emma*, he certainly did read Coleridge's *Christabel*,

[1] It is from Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

Shelley's *Alastor*, and John Hamilton Reynolds's *Naiad*. *Christabel* was to have its innings later on, but there was one book published early in 1816 which he read and fairly doted upon. He could not have enough of it. It got into his blood and started him off in fervent imitation. This epoch-making book was the little parlour-table volume, the *Story of Rimini*, by Leigh Hunt.

Keats was all prepared to worship anything Hunt did. Cowden Clarke admired him, and was his personal friend. Keats had been a sympathetic reader of the *Examiner* for years. He had probably read and admired Hunt's unimportant squib, the *Feast of the Poets*. Having elected Hunt into the chair of prophet and arbiter, Keats was ready to find *Rimini* a masterpiece. Then, too, it had a Preface which, to Keats, must have appeared the very voice of oracle. This Preface set forth Hunt's theories of versification, and poetry in general, with didactic precision. His thesis is the repudiation of Pope and his school, and the substitution of the freer style of Dryden, Spenser, and particularly of Chaucer. "I suppress a good deal that I had intended to say on the versification of the poem," he begins, but he continues, "I do not hesitate to say however, that Pope and the French school of versification have known the least on the subject, of any poets perhaps that ever wrote. They have mistaken mere smoothness for harmony; and, in fact, wrote as they did, because their ears were only sensible of a marked and uniform regularity." But he adds in fairness: "In speaking of such men, I allude, of course, only to their style in poetry, and not to their undisputed excellence in other matters."

Hunt was quite right in contending that a rigid metrical verse can be written by persons without the slightest sense of rhythm, where he went astray was in the insistence that there is a right and wrong in poetic styles. He refused to admit that, in poetry at least, what is one man's fault may be another man's virtue. Following these opinions, he goes on:

> "With the endeavour to recur to a freer spirit of versification I have joined one of still greater importance, — that of having a free and idiomatic cast of language. There is a cant of art as well as of nature, though the former is not so unpleasant as the latter, which affects non-affectation. But the proper language of poetry is in fact nothing different from that of real life, and depends for its dignity upon the strength and sentiment of what it speaks. It is only adding musical modulation to what a fine understanding might actually utter in the midst of its griefs or enjoyments. The poet therefore should do as Shakespeare or Chaucer did, — not copy what is obsolete or peculiar in either, any more than they copied their predecessors, — but use as much as possible an actual, existing language, — omitting of course *mere* vulgarisms and fugitive phrases, which are the cant of ordinary discourse."

Hunt got most of these opinions from the "Advertisement" to Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, published eighteen years before, in 1798. There was, then, nothing particularly new about them. But so slowly did fashions change a century ago, that they had by no means won current acceptance. Hunt's whole theory was excellent, the fault lay in his practice. Wordsworth was possessed of an innate dignity which Hunt was without. Wordsworth's mistakes in illustrating his theories, when he made mistakes, led to nothing worse than dullness of diction and puerility of theme; Hunt's mistakes in *Rimini* were due to his total conception, or rather misconception, of his story, and the result was a miserable, cheap form of expression which ended by smothering his poem in an atmosphere of coquettish vulgarity.

How incapable Hunt was of comprehending Dante's purpose or achievement in the *Inferno*, can be seen by another glance at his Preface. Speaking of the subject of his poem he says:

> "The following story is founded on a passage in Dante . . . The passage in question — the episode of Paolo and

> Francesca — has long been admired by the readers of Italian poetry, and is indeed the most cordial and refreshing one in the whole of that singular poem the Inferno, which some call a satire, and some an epic, and which, I confess, has always appeared to me a kind of sublime nightmare. We even lose sight of the place, in which the saturnine poet, according to his summary way of disposing both of friends and enemies, has thought proper to put the sufferers; and see the whole melancholy absurdity of his theology, in spite of itself, falling to nothing before one genuine impulse of the affections."

We need only that expression, "the affections," to give us the clue to Hunt's manner of treating his theme. A few quotations will suffice to show it in all its trite commonplace.

Francesca is introduced in this manner:

> "What need I tell of lovely lips and eyes,
> A clipsom waist, and bosom's balmy rise,
> The dress of bridal white, and the dark curls
> Bedding an airy coronet of pearls?"

We are also told that she had "stout notions on the marrying score." Paolo fares no better:

> "A graceful nose was his, lightsomely brought
> Down from a forehead of clear-spirited thought;
> Wisdom looked sweet and inward from his eye;
> And round his mouth was sensibility."

The meetings between the pair are conducted along the lines of fashionable country-house intercourse:

> "He read with her, he rode, he went a hawking,
> He spent still evenings in delightful talking."

But the worst of all these colloquial trivialities occurs in the scene in which Paolo and Francesca read the fatal book together. Francesca is sitting in a Summer-house, reading the romance of Lancelot of the Lake:

"So sat she fixed; and so observed was she
Of one, who at the door stood tenderly, —
Paolo, — who from a window seeing her
Go straight across the lawn, and guessing where,
Had thought she was in tears, and found, that day,
His usual efforts vain to keep away.
'May I come in?' said he: — it made her start, —
That smiling voice; — she coloured, pressed her heart
A moment, as for breath, and then with free
And usual tone, said 'O yes, — certainly.'"

This is tragedy depressed to the level of coloured illustration.

All the poem is not so bad as these passages which I have chosen to quote. There are scattered bits of description which are quite charming, but the tone of the tale is that of these various lines.

And Keats admired this poem! Which shows the state of his mind at the time as well as any of his own poems show it. But in spite of cockneyism and immaturity, there was already another side to Keats, and it did not take him long to outgrow *Rimini*, as we shall see.

Hunt's treatment of his poem as story is one thing, his treatment of it in the matter of versification and English is another. But, even in this latter aspect, the poem fails for want of taste. The freer treatment of the couplet was a move in the right direction; succeeding generations have upheld Hunt in the use of feminine rhymes, triplets, and run-on lines. The death of the close couplet was in the air, and Hunt was certainly one of its murderers. But no one can defend his lax rhymes and his grammatical liberties. It is very trying to have "look" rhymed with "smoke," and "emerging" with "Virgin." Londoners of Keats's class and time evidently dropped their "g's," but no educated man — and Hunt was an educated man — permits the mispronunciations of daily life to appear in his writing. Hunt did, which proves him either lazy, or so dyed-in-the-wool a

cockney that all his reading had not modified him. And there are worse infractions against good English than these. His vocabulary was so limited that he permitted himself to coin another to save himself the trouble of consulting a dictionary. He pushed past participles into adverbs, forced nouns to do duty as adjectives, put one part of speech when he should have put another — in short he made a higgledy-piggledy of grammar and countenanced it as freedom. The truth is that he sacrificed everything for one object, which was that his poem should be readable, and this in a measure he achieved, but not to anything like the extent to which he achieved it in prose. I know few essays more delightful to read than Hunt's. His poetry never reached their level.

It may seem incredible that Keats should have found beauty in the trivial little piece of tawdry sentiment which is the *Story of Rimini*. But such a sweeping condemnation is really beside the mark. It gives me pause to remember that, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, I, too, found it both beautiful and absorbing. Let us admit at once that, with all its absurdities, with all its weakness, false rhymes, and impossible grammar, the *Story of Rimini* has a certain life to it. It is not, at any rate, dull. At least it is not dull to romantic and unsophisticated youth. Its imagery is sensuous and full of colour. There is a real bustle and activity in its crowds. The gardens and pleasances are skillfully painted, and to a young person unacquainted with the story itself, or with Dante's telling of it, there is both romance and tragedy. I confess that reading it to-day, thirty years after my last reading, the only things that strike me as even passably good are the procession in the First Canto, the ride to Rimini, and the description of the gardens. But the early nineteenth century was an age of sentimentalism. Keats was steeped to his eyes in it, as we know. The influence of *Rimini* is over all his early work, especially the *Induction to a Poem*, *Calidore*, and parts of

*Sleep and Poetry*. There is everything in the poem to attract him, and we may thank Haydon, probably, and tough old Chapman, for so soon lifting him out of the point of view which could delight in it. But when Keats first read *Rimini*, Haydon and Chapman were still over the horizon. There was nobody to show him its shallowness. He simply tumbled into it head first, and there and then determined to write a poetic romance as much like this wonderful new model as possible.

There was, however, an awkward difficulty to be overcome, he had not the slightest idea what to write about. When he thought of a story, he saw a picture. He had been reading and marking his Spenser with diligence not long before. By dint of long acquaintance, Spenser's scene was more familiar to him than any other. It is quite natural, therefore, that this tale to be, presented itself to his mind in the form of an image culled from the age of chivalry. The title was evidently invented after the poem had failed to come off as intended, it is: *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem.*

The opening lines are a delightfully simple expression of his visual inspiration:

> "Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
> For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye."

A few lines later his visual imagination adds to this:

> "Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
> For while I muse, the lance points slantingly
> Athwart the morning air."

This is as vivid and reticent as a Japanese print. We have the exact atmosphere: the faint blue of the sky; the fresh, rather damp air; the silver, not the golden, sun. It is admirable, done with the greatest economy of means. Only slightly less good is this, of the lance:

> "Sometimes, when the good Knight his rest would take,
> It is reflected, clearly, in a lake,

With the young ashen boughs, 'gainst which it rests,
And th' half seen mossiness of linnets' nests."

That was what Keats saw and wanted to stamp into a picture; and that was, I think, all he saw. He might have made a sonnet upon it, and rested it there. To-day we should call it an "image" and attempt no more with it. One feels the charm, light gaiety, and Spring-like quality of the picture. But Keats knew nothing of "images," Chinese and Japanese poetry were unknown in their original forms in his day. A picture was not enough. It was not enough to suggest a tale of chivalry, he must tell it; and he had no tale to tell. A lady is thrust into the poem, a distressingly commonplace lady, whom the poet's best efforts to make real only make tasteless. Wordsworth and Hunt had failed to marry theory with practice in the matter of everyday speech in poetry, each through lack of taste. Keats, swallowing the theory with hearty good will, went equally astray. He tells us that the lady's "tender feet" are so cold that she cannot feel them, a realistic touch certainly, as she is standing on the top of a battlement open to all the four winds, but in this case an irrelevant one, so irrelevant that the stating of it breaks the mood. Hunt's unhappy influence is again seen in the pretty-prettiness of the line:

"Wraps round her ample robe with happy trembling."

In the first place, used in this way, "trembling" is a noun, and the article is left out; in the second, the expression is altogether too trivial, a kind of triviality aping the highly affecting, to which we must, I fear, apply the epithet "tawdry."

One of the lines of the poem has a sort of biographical interest, for from it we may guess at several things. The line in question:

"Oh, wherefore comes that steed so proudly by?"

contained a misprint when the poem appeared in Keats's first volume, *Poems*, 1817. The word "knight" was substituted for "steed." Keats has carefully corrected this in ink in all the copies given to his intimate friends that I have seen. But, oddly enough, the correction was not made in the copy given to the Misses Reynolds,[1] nor in the one given to Wordsworth.[2] The explanation for the first of these omissions probably lies in the fact that Marianne and Jane Reynolds were "girls," and not to be taken too seriously; but at first sight it does seem strange that Keats did not correct what is obviously a blunder in a volume given to a poet whom he admired so much as he did Wordsworth. The Wordsworth copy is inscribed "To W. Wordsworth with the Author's sincere Reverence." Another puzzling thing about this copy, and one which baffled me for a long time, was why no letter from Wordsworth acknowledging the book had ever turned up, not even so much as a reference to such a letter in any of Keats's letters, or the letters of his friends, which we have. Wordsworth found the contents so little to his liking that he never took the trouble to cut open most of the book, which fact led me to conclude that he simply ignored it and never wrote to the author at all. But the discovery of a long and carefully critical letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, acknowledging a presentation copy of Reynolds's *Naiad*, published a year earlier than Keats's *Poems*, made this seem improbable. At last what I believe to be the truth flashed upon me. Undoubtedly Keats gave Wordsworth the book one day at Haydon's studio. On the end-paper of the front cover is a drawing of a man kneeling, which may very possibly have been jotted down by Haydon for some purpose. It is well known that Haydon was fond of giving Keats's poems away. No less than four copies of *Endymion* given by Haydon to various people are in existence to-day.

[1] Author's Collection. [2] Day Collection.

I imagine that, the talk having fallen upon Keats's book on some occasion when both Keats and Wordsworth happened to be in the studio, Haydon may have produced a copy, and there and then, egged on by Haydon's enthusiasm, Keats may have written the inscription and given the book to Wordsworth. We can easily conceive that, in the flustered state in which Keats would most certainly be at such a moment, he either forgot the alteration to be made in the *Induction*, or, with a kind of pride, found the making of an alteration under the circumstances to smack of pedantry. All this is mere supposition, of course, but supposition which such facts as we know seem to point to, and it offers a reasonable explanation for a series of rather odd occurrences.

I have been forced into a long digression, now let me return with all haste to Keats writing his poem. Beyond his original image, he cannot go. A rather confused passage of the lance in war, at a tournament, and at a banquet, and the poet again exclaims, almost desperately: "Yet I must tell a tale of chivalry," but breaks off immediately to invoke the aid of Spenser through the intercession of Hunt, "thy lov'd Libertas," and here the poem ends. As it is, it is a picture spoilt, and a story never begun. Aware of its inadequateness, Keats calls it *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem*, and lets it go at that. It is an illustration of the psychology of the poet, for in it we see his constant early attempt to write, not as he wanted, not as his genius dictated, but as the canons of art as he knew them demanded. It is the first clear example of much of the tragedy of his writing life.

We have seen Keats in the Autumn, alone in Dean Street, comforting his longing for woods and fields by reading Wordsworth, and here, in spite of his immediate submission to Hunt, is a reminiscence of that reading, for line 51:

> "And always does my heart with pleasure dance"

is amusingly derivative from Wordsworth's daffodils:

> "And then my heart with pleasure fills
> And dances with the daffodils."

Keats's first romance ended in failure, yet a rather nice failure, he thought, since he included it in *Poems*, 1817. But he was not satisfied, he must get out a story somehow. He promptly set to upon *Calidore*.

*Calidore* does not start with a picture, and not really with a story, but with the necessity of telling a story. Here we have merely description, not sight. The scene is something thought of, not viewed. For instance:

> "... and shadowy trees that lean
> So elegantly o'er the waters' brim
> And show their blossoms trim."

"Elegantly" and "trim" are cockney, if anything ever was. They are Keats in the sad moments when the subconscious goes on strike.

Keats's effort to do something very fine leads, in *Calidore*, to his doing something very silly. The poem begins: "Young Calidore is paddling o'er the lake," which announcement gives the poet an opportunity to beg the question of story for two pages. These two pages he devotes to description. But Keats is intent on the fine thing he is about to do, and he forgets to think himself back into fact — not a usual fault with him, by the way. Lacking any clear vision of the scene, he makes it up out of words only. There could hardly be a greater number of factual errors, all contained in a few lines, than there are in this passage:

> "Green tufted islands casting their soft shades
> Across the lake; sequester'd leafy glades,
> That through the dimness of their twilight show
> Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow
> Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems
> Of delicate birch trees, or long grass which hems

A little brook. The youth had long been viewing
These pleasant things, and heaven was bedewing
The mountain flowers, when his glad senses caught
A trumpet's silver voice."

Because an island is tufted, is no reason for it to cast a "soft shade." Foxgloves are not spiral. Wild cat's eyes can scarcely have been "pleasant things" to observe staring at one.[1] Heaven does not bedew flowers, and why these should be "mountain flowers" when there is no mountain, is a mystery. In the next stanza appears a most unhappy metaphor, which is quite out of the picture. *Calidore* sees a castle on one of the islands to which he rows, and the nick of time which he takes to get to it is illustrated in this way:

"Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches,
Before the point of his light shallop reaches
Those marble steps that through the water dip."

The metaphor is bad because, instead of heightening the description of the action, it presents a perfectly alien picture to the mind. We instantly see the hanging peaches and the bees buzzing round them, and this brings with it the sense of glittering sunlight. Calidore's twilight, Calidore himself, the island, the castle — all vanish, and we get them back with difficulty.

Yet there are good things in these two pages, and a hint of what Keats will do later on with scenes. The steps dipping into the water are well conceived.

At this point, Keats is forced to start on his story. Calidore mounts the steps:

"... Over them he goes with hasty trip,
And scarcely stays to ope the folding doors:
Anon he leaps along the oaken floors
Of halls and corridors."

Few things in poetry are worse than this grasshopper-

[1] [Keats must have meant the English wild flower called the cat's-eye. Miss Lowell discovered her error too late to correct it.]

like entrance of Calidore into the castle. Keats could hardly have chosen a series of more infelicitous words. And he continues in the same strain, with a true love scene out of Hunt's laboratory. It is too long to quote, and yet I will quote it, for no one who has not read it can appreciate what Keats had to outgrow, and the extraordinary speed with which he did it:

"Delicious sounds! those little bright-eyed things
That float about the air on azure wings,
Had been less heartfelt to him than the clang
Of clattering hoofs; into the court he sprang,
Just as two noble steeds, and palfreys twain,
Were slanting out their necks with loosened rein;
While from beneath the threat'ning portcullis
They brought their happy burthens. What a kiss,
What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand!
How tremblingly their delicate ankles spann'd!
Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone,
While whisperings of affection
Made him delay to let their tender feet
Come to the earth; with an incline so sweet
From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent:
And whether there were tears of languishment,
Or that the evening dew had pearl'd their tresses,
He feels a moisture on his cheek, and blesses
With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye,
All the soft luxury
That nestled in his arms. A dimpled hand,
Fair as some wonder out of fairy land,
Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers
Of whitest Cassia, fresh from summer showers:
And this he fondled with his happy cheek
As if for joy he would no further seek;
When the kind voice of good Sir Clerimond
Came to his ear, like something from beyond
His present being: so he gently drew
His warm arms, thrilling now with pulses new,
From their sweet thrall, and forward gently bending,
Thank'd heaven that his joy was never ending;

> While 'gainst his forehead he devoutly press'd
> A hand heaven made to succour the distress'd;
> A hand that from the world's bleak promontory
> Had lifted Calidore for deeds of Glory."

Comment fails before that passage. The saccharine sentimentality of it is astounding, and no parody could exceed the ghastly rhodomontade of the last two lines.

Before Calidore and the ladies, stands a knight, to whom are given the two best lines of the poem:

> "So that the waving of his plumes would be
> High as the berries of a wild ash tree."

The knight greets Calidore, and the whole company go into a "pleasant chamber" and sit down, and we are told that

> "The sweet-lipp'd ladies have already greeted
> All the green leaves that round the window clamber."

This is certainly a most cordial household, where the very vines come in for a share of the abundant largess of the ladies' kisses. They compose themselves to ease:

> "Sir Gondibert has doff'd his shining steel,
> Gladdening in the free, and airy feel
> Of a light mantle."

This is the first time that Keats's favourite "feel" as a noun appears in his verse, and here it seems peculiarly objectionable. The poem ends with everybody sitting about comfortably and chatting, with moonlight, and the scent of lime flowers, and the song of the nightingale, and the sound of a distant trumpet, all coming in through the window. The poem breaks off in the middle of a line and closes with asterisks, as though Keats knew very well that he had not finished it.

A more disappointing "tale of chivalry" can scarcely be imagined. What attracted Keats to the period was not so

much its spirit as its trappings. He loved the forests, the meads, the rivers, and islanded lakes. He loved the stuffs, the wrought devices on armour, the colours of banners and harness, the sound of trumpets in a bright and open air. All this ceremonial of pageant and banquet, all this gentle and courteous advance into love, with the paraphernalia of "bowers," "tapers," "silken couches," "goblets of sparkling wine," "moonlight on embroidered vestments," enchanted his imagination. Intrigued as he was by the purely external side of the age of chivalry, he could by no means give it a soul. *Calidore* is maudlin just because he found it luscious. Its fundamental badness, a badness quite apart from all its other faults, is that it is a product of intellect plus sensation, and is without an ounce of real feeling. He felt the plumes and the lance in the *Induction*, he felt nothing whatever in *Calidore*.

But we must not be too hard on Keats, nor shall we be if we remember the circumstances: the distasteful medical studies, the long hours by hospital beds, the uncongenial young men with whom he lodged, the part of London he lodged in. He was in love with beauty, and because he grasped it most easily through material things is far from meaning that he did not feel it in those of deeper significance. The stuff and nonsense of *Calidore* reveals more than a striving after picture-book literature, it reveals a spirit starved of those essentials to its health — love and beauty. Within the sentimental expression lies a sincere craving. These two poems are evidence of

> "The large-eyed wonder, and ambitious heat
> Of the aspiring boy,"

to quote from *Calidore*. We may ridicule — who could help it? We may even feel distinctly ashamed for Keats. But it is a poor analysis which does not comprehend the particular why of Keats's delight in the *Story of Rimini*, and the impulses, other than literary, from which the *Induction* and *Calidore* sprang.

Meanwhile an event was approaching which was to have an enormous effect upon Keats, was, in fact, to change his whole life. That the change would have come soon, at any rate, cannot be doubted, but this particular event brought it about more immediately than could otherwise have been the case. Cowden Clarke decided to show some of Keats's poems to Leigh Hunt.

Hunt, after leaving prison in 1815, had sojourned for a while at Maida Vale, but in the following Autumn had returned to Hampstead and early in 1816 was definitely settled in a little house in the Vale of Health. Hunt possessed the happy faculty of sociability. His house, even when it was a prison, became a meeting-place for his friends, and these friends were the chief writers, poets, artists, musicians, of the period — of all such, at least, as sympathized with Hunt's point of view. It was a sort of high class Bohemia, meeting between the four walls of a perfectly domestic home. Hampstead, in those days, was really country, but country only a little removed from town. It could be reached on foot easily enough, and Hunt's house was the ideal goal for a long walk; it could be reached by stage more easily still, with plenty of margin for strolls, chats, and tea. Clarke was a frequent visitor, and one fine day he carried with him a few of Keats's poems to see what Hunt thought of them. Horace Smith happened to be there also ( it was the occasion on which he made the remark I have already quoted about the last line of *How many Bards*[1]), and the two men were much struck by the poems. Even Clarke's enthusiasm was "not prepared for the unhesitating and prompt admiration which broke forth before he [Hunt] had read twenty lines of the first poem." If the first poem consisted of twenty lines or more, it must have been the *Epistle to George Felton Mathew*, the *Induction*, or *Calidore*, for Clarke would certainly not have taken any of the earlier long things, and

[1] See Vol. I, p. 117.

it speaks volumes for Hunt's insight that he could deduce so much promise in the poems shown him. Hunt was a very good critic of everybody's work but his own. Along certain lines, he has never been surpassed. His own account of the incident shows clearly just what he felt and how much:

> [1] "I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the exuberant specimens of genuine though young poetry that were laid before me."

If we stop a moment to realize what, at this time, Keats had written, we shall be astonished at Hunt's acumen. We cannot doubt that Keats's sonnet on Hunt's leaving prison was in Clarke's bundle, and it argues much for Hunt's perspicacity that he rejected this, and the obvious imitations of his own style — the *Induction* and *Calidore* — and settled upon the *Sonnet to Solitude*, the most reticent poem of the lot, to print in the *Examiner*. For that is what he did, good fellow, he took the sonnet for his paper. Hunt was shrewd, however, and he had enjoyed a large experience with poetical aspirants. He would not commit himself to an interview without being sure of his man. Clarke reports his attitude without a hint of humour:

> "After making numerous and eager inquiries about him personally, and with reference to any peculiarities of mind and manner, the visit ended in my being requested to bring him over to the Vale of Health."

Keats being reported "dependable" in a social sense, Hunt characteristically flung his door open to him. He was not a man of half measures in friendship, at least not if he could help it. Hospitality was no theory with him; it was a sound, practical fact. In asking Clarke to bring Keats to see him, he was prepared, if circumstances warranted, to offer him the immediate freedom of his house.

[1] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt.

When the meeting took place exactly, we do not know, but Hunt has clearly stated[1] that when he printed the *Sonnet to Solitude* he had not yet met Keats personally. The sonnet appeared in the *Examiner* of May fifth, 1816, and the inference of Hunt's paragraph is that the meeting occurred directly afterwards.

What the suggestion of such an interview must have meant to Keats, we can easily imagine. When Clarke told him that Hunt was to print his sonnet, the news must have been overwhelming. To be really in print is an enormous step for any man who cherishes designs on literature. I believe that those fourteen lines in actual type were the determining factor in Keats's decision to give up surgery; but the idea was still in embryo, for it was only two months since he had entered himself for another year's term at the hospital. The idea once in his head, he began coquetting with it, and the coquetting gradually became a convinced purpose. Yet I do not believe his abandoning surgery was so much because he disliked that profession as that he liked poetry a great deal better. Keats, entirely apart from his poetic faculty, was a decidedly able man. After all, a sensible man breaks with some reluctance from a calling he has pursued for five years. Keats never played the poet. He was no precocious youngster vapouring about the artist's *milieu*. Hitherto he had simply considered it impossible for him not to be a surgeon. The printing of the sonnet revealed to him a hesitating doubt. Suppose — suppose — and that, I think, was as far as he dared to go, for he wisely did nothing at the moment, not until he had got his diploma.

They went, then, Clarke and Keats, to call upon Hunt. Clarke has described Keats's looks and attitude on the occasion:

> "That was a 'red-letter day' in the young poet's life, and one which will never fade with me while memory

[1] Review of Keats's *Poems* in the *Examiner*, July 9, 1817.

> lasts. The character and expression of Keats's features would arrest even the casual passenger in the street; and now they were wrought to a tone of animation that I could not but watch with interest, knowing what was in store for him from the bland encouragement, and Spartan deference in attention, with fascinating conversational eloquence, that he was to encounter and receive. As we approached the Heath, there was the rising and accelerated step, with the gradual subsidence of all talk. The interview, which stretched into three 'morning calls,' was the prelude to many after-scenes and saunterings about Caen Wood and its neighbourhood; for Keats was suddenly made a familiar of the household, and was always welcomed."

It has been the fashion of recent years to belittle Hunt, to patronize him as a man of small account, and Keats's admirers and biographers have outdone one another in denouncing him as the instigator of all that is worst in Keats's poetry. But this is a myopic view. A man of no account does not persist in living for a hundred years as a personality to be reckoned with, even to the extent of cursing, to continually succeeding generations. Hunt was not a great creator certainly, but he was a great introducer. His peculiar quality was that he considered poetry as an art, not as a rag-bag for inconsequential erudition. Would that a score of Hunts could be dotted round among our colleges; it would do us a world of good. I can never forget that it was his *Imagination and Fancy* which first taught me what poetry was. There is no better text-book for the appreciation of poetry than that volume. He had what I may call a touch-stone mind; he knew instinctively what was good and never feared to proclaim it. His limitations are plain enough, and became only too plain to Keats later on. But that he stimulated Keats to increasing effort, no one can fail to see. The books by which we know him best were none of them written in Keats's day, but the man who wrote them was there in his conversation.

Forget that he perpetrated *Rimini*, and then notice what an immeasurable advance *I Stood Tip-toe Upon a Little Hill* is over the *Induction* and *Calidore*. If his influence had been entirely baneful, Keats would not have improved so much in a few short months as the comparison of these poems shows that he did. Hunt was suggestive; that was, and is, his secret. He may be outgrown, but at a certain stage he is invaluable, and Keats encountered him at just that stage. He was that rare thing, a constructive critic; he knew how to instruct without dampening. Where he erred was in being too kind. But give Keats half a chance and he could not help learning, he learnt so fast that he outlearnt his teacher in a short time, but that is only to say that Keats was a genius and Hunt was not. That Hunt did not gauge the difference quite soon enough, merely argues Hunt's very natural slowness when brought into contact with so swift a mind as Keats possessed. It is, after all, the incident of the hen who hatched a duckling, all over again; but the duckling would have been in very poor case at one stage without the hen.

Let us see for a few moments what Hunt's contemporaries thought of him — not the men of a later period, who doled pence into his dripping pockets and gave him odd literary jobs to keep his old age going, with a gentle compassion, indeed, but also with a good deal of condescension. He outlived his time. The youth of his old age was tuned to another key. He had faults in plenty; he borrowed of everyone and never returned a copper. Many faults always, but marked virtues too, and the chief of these were sincerity and a kindly good nature which he never outgrew. The men who knew him in daily intercourse all attest his charm. To Charles Lamb, he was "one of the most cordial-minded men I ever knew, a matchless fireside companion." Hazlitt, in a half-humourous, wholly complaining, letter to Hunt, says: "I have said you were one of the pleasantest and cleverest persons I ever knew,

but that you teased any one you had to deal with out of their lives," both of which facts are undoubtedly true. Crabb Robinson calls Hunt "an enthusiast, very well intentioned"; he describes the impression of one meeting by saying: "There was a glee about him." Robinson's summing up of Hunt is very pertinent: "He loves everything, he catches the sunny side of everything, and excepting that he has a few polemical antipathies, finds everything beautiful." The exuberant Haydon says practically the same thing, if we make allowance for his usual garishness of expression. He writes to Wilkie on October twenty-seventh, 1816:

> "I have been at Hampstead this fortnight for my eyes, and shall return with my body much stronger for application. The greater part of my time has been spent in Leigh Hunt's society, who is certainly one of the most delightful companions. Full of poetry and art, and amiable humour, we argue always with full hearts on everything but religion and Buonaparte, and we have resolved never to talk of these . . . Though Leigh Hunt is not deep in knowledge, moral, metaphysical, or classical, yet he is intense in feeling, and has an intellect forever on the alert. . . . As a poet, I think him full of genuine feeling. His third canto in 'Rimini' is equal to anything in any language of that sweet sort."

We see by this last sentence how the Hunt circle took *Rimini*. Small wonder, therefore, that Keats should have been its dupe for a while. Later Haydon quarrelled with Hunt over the non-return of some spoons borrowed by Mrs. Hunt, but even after that Haydon could not resist Hunt's perennial attractiveness, he records that

> "Accidentally meeting him at a friend's, he was so exceedingly delightful I could not resist the dog. We forgot our quarrels and walked away together, quoting, and joking and laughing as if nothing had happened."

Hunt's faults estranged his friends; his charm and per-

fectly sincere warm-heartedness held them; one and all, they fell in and out with him over and over again, and in the end they all have a good word to say. With his enemies, it was a different matter; both his literary canons and his radical political opinions raised up for him a host of bitter enemies. He was pursued, in these early years, driven, tormented, by the adherents of a Tory government, yet he stood firm. His host of enemies alone is enough to disprove the theory of his being a man of no importance. So much ink is not spilled over a nonentity. He cooled down into a gentle and tolerated old man — true; but he had had a fiery youth, and when Keats met him he was in his heyday.

Apparently Keats did not meet any of Hunt's more intimate friends during the early Summer of 1816; or, if he did meet them, the meetings led to no consequences. Hunt himself was a vastly stimulating, but possibly a somewhat awe-inspiring, companion, in the beginning of their acquaintance. Keats was anything but a hero-worshipper in actual life, he held his own with perfect dignity and independence always, but it would have been very strange if he had not considered himself lucky beyond reason in being permitted to stroll and talk with Hunt. The hail-fellow-well-met days of their companionship do not seem to have begun until the Autumn. Keats was a very busy man in May and June, his examinations were coming on in July and he had no intention of failing in them. If he coquetted with the idea of giving up everything for poetry, as I have suggested, he did so with admirable common-sense. An apothecary's diploma once his, he was prepared for any eventuality. He would get it, and what he did afterwards was his own affair. Besides, Abbey was still in the background, and Keats would not come of age until the very end of the next October. But no matter how hard he had to study, no matter how often he stole time to run out to Hampstead, he went right on writing po-

etry. The most important poem of this period is *I Stood Tip-toe Upon a Little Hill.*

Sir Sidney Colvin thinks that *I Stood Tip-toe* was written in the following Autumn or Winter. I am compelled to disagree with him. That the poem was not *finished* until the Winter, we know, for in a letter to Charles Cowden Clarke, postmarked December 17, 1816, Keats says: "I have done little to 'Endymion' lately — I hope to finish it in one more attack." *Tip-toe* was first called *Endymion*, but was eventually published in *Poems*, 1817, without a title, presumably because, before the book was printed, Keats had begun to plan his long poem of that name. My reasons for differing from Sir Sidney are, first, Hunt's distinct statement:[1] "This poem was suggested to Keats by a delightful summer's day, as he stood beside the gate that leads from the Battery on Hampstead Heath into a field by Caen Wood." Professor de Sélincourt, who makes no attempt to date the poem, after recording Keats's letter, does say however: "But the earlier part of the poem at least reads more like a summer rhapsody than a mere winter's reminiscence." To be sure it does, and so much so that, without Keats's letter, the poem would date itself automatically. It is scarcely likely that Keats, all keyed up as he must have been by his intercourse with Hunt, should not have felt impelled to write something. The exuberance with which the poem overflows points to some particular excitement over and above the Summer's day. My second reason, then, is just this, the evidence of the lines themselves. My third reason is the entire difference of attitude and tone in this poem and in *Sleep and Poetry*. *I Stood Tip-toe* is delightfully unpremeditated, it is a perfect burst of enthusiasm; *Sleep and Poetry* is premeditated throughout. Keats worked over *I Stood Tip-toe* with great care, as we can see by a fragment of the first draft [2]

[1] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt.
[2] Widener Library. Harvard University.

which is still extant, he may even have written the much less good last part in the Autumn and Winter, but that it was begun immediately after the walk which fathered it seems abundantly evident.

*I Stood Tip-toe* is the first thoroughly characteristic poem which Keats wrote. The days of his "juvenilia" are definitely over. However many poor poems he afterwards composed, and they were not a few, they were mere lapses, for, in *I Stood Tip-toe*, Keats struck the vein which was eminently and absolutely his. The poem is less a completed work of art than the *Odes*, for instance, but there are passages in it which he never surpassed. The whole beginning is magnificent, I do not know that Keats has anywhere done better descriptions.

*I Stood Tip-toe* is so well known that there is no need to quote it; but there is some need to examine it in detail, I think, if we would follow Keats's development as man and poet.

To begin with, we must postulate conditions. Keats is in a perfect fury of delight. Life is teeming with interest, the world is extraordinarily beautiful. His happiness is so great that everything he sees is brighter, finer, lovelier, than anything has ever been before. When we think of Keats's life as "painful," we must not forget to balance that thought by the recollection of his absolute rapture in moods like this which produced *I Stood Tip-toe*.

Keats heads the poem with a motto from the beloved Rimini: "Places of nestling green for Poets made." The beginning of the poem, although it does not contain any of its best lines, is so important that I must quote it:

> "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,
> The air was cooling, and so very still,
> That the sweet buds that with a modest pride
> Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
> Their scantly leaved, and finely tapering stems,
> Had not yet lost those starry diadems

Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves:
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green."

There is much food for thought in that passage, for it mingles two perfectly distinct types of poetry, an old and a new; and two opposed forms of expression, a stereotyped and an original. Much of it is artificial, much is *cliché*. As illustrations of the former, there is the "modest pride" of the buds, the "sobbing of the morn," and "morn" itself; for the latter, there is the old metaphor of clouds as sheep, only relieved by the fancy of their having just come out of a fresh brook, and the other ancient figure of the sky as a blue field. Keats was dogged by this kind of thing in his early work. His literary life was one long effort to escape from it and remain poetic. Again and again he fell back, always to make a new start toward freedom. But there is the second type of poetry to be considered, and the second form of expression. The "modest pride" of the buds is unfortunate — granted, but what could be better as observation, more true to fact, than that they

"Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scantly leaved, and finely tapering stems,"

and what originality of expression the "slanting" shows, a modern touch, which was then only modern because it was indubitably Keats. We see the same thing in the "shades that slanted o'er the green." We regret "o'er" because it is a contraction which present-day poetry has agreed to drop, but naturally it did not trouble Keats's ear, intent upon the slants of light, shade, and tint. The "noiseless noise" is absolutely perfect, and what a strange thing that

this effect of Summer calm should have been noted by Dorothy Wordsworth in the very same words. In her Alfoxden Journal for January twenty-third, 1798, she speaks of "That noiseless noise which lives in the summer air." Keats could not possibly have known this, the duplicate expression is mere coincidence, but it goes to show how minutely careful both Keats and Dorothy Wordsworth were in recording natural impressions. Lovers of nature, the two of them. After this beginning, Keats is much more himself. The whole first part thereafter, until the entrance of the maiden, is free of both artificiality and unobservant figure. It is a marvel of first-hand writing.

A few lines farther on there is a perfect description of the how and the why of the poem:

> "I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free
> As though the fanning wings of Mercury
> Had played upon my heels: I was light-hearted
> And many pleasures to my vision started;
> So I straightway began to pluck a posey
> Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy."

We may take the poem, then, as being simply a series of "luxuries." The first stanza represents the scene he saw; the succeeding stanzas, the scenes he imagines.

Keats was very sensitive to three kinds of beauty: beauty of natural objects, beauty of story, beauty of phrase. At this period, he was not awakened to the beauty of human passion, that developed later.

Evidently *I Stood Tip-toe* was a favourite poem with Keats and with his friends. We happen to know just what they thought about it. In a copy of the *Poems*[1] given by Keats to his brother George, many of the lines are underscored. For instance, in the passage:

> "A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined,
> And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind

[1] Author's Collection.

> Upon their summer thrones; there too should be
> The frequent chequer of a youngling tree"

the lines

> "... clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
> Upon their summer thrones"

is not only scored, but double-scored, while the far more beautiful "chequer of a youngling tree" is not marked at all. The superb passage beginning:

> "Open afresh your round of starry folds
> Ye ardent marigolds!"

is marked, and the splendid short line double marked. The sweet-pea passage is scored, and "on tip-toe for a flight" double-scored. The minnows and goldfinches are scored, but not double-scored. The rising moon is scored, and the excellent word "swim" approved by double-scoring. The apostrophe to the moon, "O maker of sweet poets" is double-scored, but one cannot think that this was so much for its wording as for what the boys undoubtedly believed to be its truth.

The sentimentality of the time and the environment creeps in too, in the double-scoring of the "nips" which Cupid and Psyche "gave each other's cheeks," in the double-scoring of the four lines which begin "Poor nymph, — poor Pan," and which end with the horrible "balmy pain," and in the friends who, beholding the recovery of those sick, are "nigh foolish with delight." But it is only fair to add that the beautiful line, "Full in the speculation of the stars," is also double-scored.

Let us see what Keats has put into his "world of blisses" as he calls it in line 54. A bush of May flowers full of bees; a "lush laburnam"; moss; violets; a filbert hedge overgrown with sweet-briar; a brook, its banks covered with blue-bells; marigolds, hot and burning; sweet-peas, so per-

fectly *felt*, so entirely presented, that the passage *is* sweet-peas forever after to any one who has read it. This is a catalogue of things that Keats likes. It is foolish to seek an allegory beneath the words, none is needed. This is a portrait of John Keats aged twenty, recorded in a list of "luxuries."

Leaving flowers, Keats, started by his "spring-head of clear waters," bethinks him of a brook he knows. Cowden Clarke says that Keats told him that this brook passage was a recollection of walks taken together, when they [1]"frequently loitered over the rail of a foot-bridge that spanned . . . a little brook in the last field upon entering Edmonton." What better description is there in literature of the smooth flowing of a deep brook than "How silent comes the water round that bend"? One can almost smell the dampness of it. But, even here, Keats is caught in the net of his reading. How could he lug in Shakespeare so crudely! And he did not better the passage in *As You Like It:*

> "Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything"

with his

> "To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach
> A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds."

The goldfinches, his next "luxury," may have been borrowed from Chaucer's *The Floure and the Lefe:*

> "Therein a goldfinch leaping pretile
> Fro bough to bough, and as him list he eet
> Here and there of buds and floures sweet,"

as Woodhouse thinks, but that would go to prove Cowden Clarke's memory at fault in believing that Keats had not read Chaucer until the following February, when he found a volume of that poet in Clarke's room. Clarke is very

[1] *Recollections of Writers*, by Charles Cowden Clarke.

careful to state that he is not absolutely certain that this was Keats's first introduction to Chaucer, but Woodhouse has the true student's love of tracing sources. After all, what need had Keats for Chaucer's goldfinches when he had the birds themselves to remember? In spite of Woodhouse, it seems more likely that he took his picture from real goldfinches often seen. At any rate, this is not borrowing, but metamorphosing, and is open to no such objection as the stealing of Shakespeare's "sermons."

The next "bliss," not unnaturally in a youth of twenty, is a woman, but Keats was not happy in drawing women. We may dismiss this lady of the "locks auburne" as having nothing very attractive about her except the rustle of her dress "fanning away the dandelion's down." The lady, having crossed the bridge and departed from the poem, Keats exclaims "What next?" And the "next" is perhaps the most beautiful passage in the whole poem:

> "... A tuft of evening primroses,
> O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes;
> O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep,
> But that 'tis ever startled by the leap
> Of buds into ripe flowers; or by the flitting
> Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting;
> Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
> Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
> Coming into the blue with all her light."

Lord Houghton notes a variant reading of the last two lines of this passage:

> "Floating through space with ever-living eye,
> The crowned queen of ocean and the sky."

Here we have it — artificiality and *cliché*, both at once. We may thank the power of growth in Keats which caused him to strike them out and substitute the daring originality of the lines as they stand.

Immediately following upon this passage is an invoca-

tion to the moon, Keats's tutelary goddess. The genesis of Keats's peculiar love for the moon appears in it, the moon which meant to him something so illusive and beautiful, so mystical and pure, so inciting and satisfying, that, despite his many attempts, he was never able to express the full complexity of his feeling in words. The moon, to Keats, was both itself and a symbol; its shining was peace, the glimmer and smoothness of its light and shade were the ever baffled search of an ideal leading through mystery to imagined truth. There is no aspect of the moon, seen, or experienced in the penumbra of dreaming, with which Keats was not familiar. He dwelt with her in his heart. She was his rapture, his torment, his provocation to a bold and achieving life, his comforter, his pride. Only later, when life grew imperative and anxious, did Keats lose his preoccupation with the moon.

The invocation begins:

> "O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight
> Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers;
> Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,
> Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams."

But *I Stood Tip-toe* is not *Endymion*. Keats has not yet reached a full understanding of what, to him, is involved in the moon. Here the moon's chief glory is to

> "... smile on us to tell delightful stories,"

and he goes on to picture these stories with the peculiar scene which each sort of tale suggests. The finest and simplest of these scenes is that contained in the lines:

> "In the calm grandeur of a sober line,
> We see the waving of the mountain pine."

It is perhaps worth while to notice another reminiscence of his reading in the "mountain pine." A pine, a pine on a mountain — it is a delightful thought, the essence of

lonely, elevated grandeur, just the sort of thing Keats never failed to observe. This mountain pine is full of connotations to the imaginative mind. Keats had never seen a mountain when he wrote *Tip-toe*, but he had seen pines and he had read in *Cymbeline* of

> "... the rud'st wind
> That by the top doth take the mountain pine,"

and in the *Merchant of Venice* that

> "You may as well forbid the mountain pines
> To wag their high tops and to make no noise,
> When they are fretted with the gusts of heaven."

Not only the pine, but the wind taking the pine, intrigued him. We have seen how the flight of wind and its effect upon foliage had always intrigued him. In this very poem he has remarked the wind blowing across a clump of woodbine. Knowing this, we can feel the appropriateness of his "waving of the mountain pine." He conceives it standing alone, bending to a high air, and, contemplating it so, what better illustration could he have for the "calm grandeur of a sober line"! When Keats uses his reading in this way, he is not copying, but recording an experience, none the less real because it is vicarious, engendered in his imagination. The mountain pine stayed with him, as intense experiences always do. We find it again in *Endymion* in the Hymn to Pan:

> "By every wind that nods the mountain pine."

The moon leads Keats to mythology, and he proceeds to detail the "luxuries" of legend: Cupid and Psyche; Pan and Syrinx; Narcissus; and finally Endymion, whose love for the moon makes him a particularly sympathetic hero to Keats. It must be admitted that, in spite of lines of much beauty, the telling of these legends is too much touched with sentimentality to keep them on a level with

the first part of the poem. They are, in fact, boyish, a lapse backward in technique. The sure touch of the earlier descriptive passages is not in them.

The poem ends on a wide leap of the imagination. One might almost call it a spiritually autobiographic leap. Keats conceives that from the love of Diana and Endymion a poet is born. What poet is in kinship of spirit nearer to these two than himself? He does not quite say so, but there is little doubt that he dallied with the idea — playfully in seeming, but unquestionably in his own heart with a much deeper significance. He laughed with himself at the idea, and yet he cherished it. Both the humour and the significance of this bold thrust of fancy are in the last four lines:

> "Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses,
> That follow'd thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses:
> Was there a Poet born? — but now no more,
> My wand'ring spirit must no farther soar."

No holograph of *I Stood Tip-toe* was known to Keats's early editors, or, at least, no holograph of a first draught. A fair copy of a part of the poem (lines 96 to 182) was in the Rowfant collection and is now in mine. In his Complete Edition, Buxton Forman has noted its variant readings from the printed text. They are few and unimportant. The single sheet on which Keats copied the passage has an inscription in Haydon's handwriting written sideways in the margin: "Given me by my Dear Friend Keats — B. R. Haydon." Two fragments of the first draft are extant, however, one beginning with line 38 and ending with line 48, and the other, which is merely the reverse of the sheet, consisting of twelve lines starting with line 53. This scrap, evidently cut from the full manuscript, was given to James T. Fields, the Boston publisher, by Charles Cowden Clarke, and is now in the Widener Library. Its obverse side was reproduced by Mrs. Fields in *Scribner's*

*Magazine* for March, 1888, and again, later, in her volume, *A Shelf of Old Books*, published in 1895. It is therefore a little odd that Buxton Forman should have failed to incorporate its readings in the text of his Complete Edition, published in 1900. Apparently he knew nothing of it, and only came across it in time to print it as an "addendum" to the first volume of that edition. Professor de Sélincourt ignores it completely, so I suppose that he is not yet aware of its existence.

This first fragment is particularly interesting as showing Keats working and reworking, even in the heat of composition, and clearly reveals why a poem conceived in Midsummer took months to finish. Keats often had several poems going at once, and worked at whatever one he felt in the mood for at any given time, which is the reason that his poems remained in a half-finished state so long.

The line "The frequent chequer of a youngling tree" was at first not that at all, but began: "The delicate ash," and "delicate" was originally something else, a word I have been unable to decipher. However, this beginning was immediately cancelled in favour of the line as it now stands, except that "a" was originally "some." The next line began "Of beechen green," which gave place at once to "That shoots with many of its light green peers." Then "shoots" was struck out and "sprouts" substituted. Finally, all this was scratched out, and the line as it is now was written underneath. The forty-first line read first: "Round which is found the spring-head of a stream," which was soon changed to the present "Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters." The daughters of the stream were first "blue eyed," then "fragrant," then "fairest," and finally "blooming," the text reading of "lovely" is evidently the result of a later revision; and they were "woodland hyacinths" to start with, but this was abandoned as soon as written and "Spreading blue bells" boldly begins again the unfinished line, which is at

once carried to a triumphant conclusion. The marigold passage is illuminating. It originally began "Come ye bright Marigolds," and there the line stops, whether because Keats cancelled what he had written before finishing the line, or whether he at first intended to begin the passage with a short line instead of ending it so, it is impossible to tell. The forty-seventh line starts off: "Open afresh your congregated," but before he writes "folds" Keats decides against the adjective and puts above it "crowns," immediately completing the line with "of starry folds." Nevertheless, "crowns" does not entirely satisfy him and he deletes it in favour of "cinques," but again writes above, "round," although without scratching out "cinques," leaving the two words as alternatives to be decided upon later. "Ye ardent marigolds" came at once in all its glorious perfection, but minus the exclamation point. Keats's punctuation is largely of the type which is put in afterwards.

The use of short lines is particularly interesting in view of what Keats did with them afterwards in the various songs in *Endymion*. Professor de Sélincourt thinks that he caught the trick of them from Spenser's nuptial *Odes*, or from Milton's *Lycidas* — very probably, and both together.

The second fragment contains a discovery. It begins, as I have said, with line 53; but the line following line 60 is not, as we should expect, 61, but 107. After this, the fragment continues substantially as we know it, ending with line 110. This looks as though the fifty lines which tell of the minnows and goldfishes and the auburn-haired maiden were an afterthought due to revision. Unfortunately, since we have no more of the first draft, this discovery leads to nothing more definite than a query.

How much of *I Stood Tip-toe* was done in the Summer, we can only guess. If there were any actual break, I should suppose it to have occurred just before the invoca-

tion. What is more probable is that Keats wrote most of the part preceding this in his first heat and roughly sketched the course of the second section in his mind, and that he kept tinkering on the whole poem constantly until it was done.

*I Stood Tip-toe* does not represent all the poetry that Keats wrote during May and June. There are three fugitive sonnets which we know of. His impending examination only troubled the rim of his mind, evidently, although it must have taken up a good deal of valuable time.

Among Keats's friends was a certain Charles Wells, who had been a schoolfellow of Tom's though not of his brothers. Wells was a red-haired, snub-nosed, blue-eyed, little fellow,[1] full of boisterous spirits, and with an irrepressible fondness for practical jokes. Keats liked him very well, until his tendency towards practical joking led him to play a cruel prank on Tom Keats which John never forgave. He is known to posterity as the author of a now defunct poem, *Joseph and his Brethren*, published some years after Keats's death. This poem had a recrudescence, many years after its appearance, owing to the surprising admiration of Rossetti, but has long faded out of sight. In 1816, Wells was a boy of fifteen, and for some reason he was moved to send Keats a bunch of roses. Buxton Forman, who got his information from Horne, thinks that the roses were in the nature of an apology from Wells for having offended Keats in some way. At any rate, he sent them, and Keats replied with a sonnet. *To a Friend who sent me some Roses* is a pleasant, though not particularly good, sonnet, but it shows Keats's reading at the time. Yes, the short lines in *I Stood Tip-toe* may very well have come from *Lycidas*, for here is *Lycidas* again in the second line of the sonnet. "What time the sky-lark" is just "What time the grayfly" of Milton's poem. Keats unblushingly

[1] Colvin.

changes his live-stock and considers the expression his. I cannot dismiss this sonnet without noting Keats's fanciful way of producing atmosphere. He wanders in the fields "what time the sky-lark" etc., but also

> "... when anew
> Adventurous knights take up their dinted shields,"

which is surely one of the most Spring-like things ever written, although one would be puzzled to say why.

Some time earlier in the month, the far better sonnet, *To one who has been long in city pent*, was composed. George Keats wrote on a transcript he made of the poem: "Written in the Fields — June, 1816." The "fields" were undoubtedly Hampstead Heath and its environs. Did Keats not notice, or did he not care, that he was indebted to *Paradise Lost* for his first line? Milton's line which, consciously or unconsciously, Keats copied is:

> "As one who long in populous city pent."

The last three lines of the octave of Keats's sonnet are an amusing bit of self-revelation:

> "Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
> Of wavy grass and reads a debonair
> And gentle tale of love and languishment."

No better characterization of *Rimini* could be given, and without a doubt it was *Rimini* that he read "in the fields."

A third sonnet seems to date from this time: *Oh! how I love, on a fair summer's eve*. It is a sort of companion piece to the *City Pent* sonnet, but greatly inferior. So like are the two, that it is very interesting to compare them line by line, but there is no space for that here. It is probable that *Oh! how I love* was written first, and that Keats, realizing it was a failure, used the subject over again. Both the sonnet to Wells and the *City Pent* sonnet were printed in *Poems*,

1817; *Oh! how I love* was not printed at all in Keats's lifetime,[1] which seems to prove Keats's opinion of it.

We have no record of any poems written in July. Clearly Keats was obliged to buckle down to his medical studies during that month. On July twenty-fifth, 1816, came the fateful examination, and Keats went up and — passed. No wonder his fellow students were dumbfounded, but so it was. A page of the Register of Apothecaries' Hall, printed as a form to be filled in, reads as follows:[2]

"*July 25th* 1816.

*189* Mr. *John Keats of full age* — CANDIDATE for
a CERTIFICATE to practise as an APOTHECARY in *the Country.*
An APPRENTICE to Mr. *Thomas Hammond of Edmonton*
APOTHECARY FOR *5* Years
TESTIMONIAL from *Mr. Thomas Hammond* —

LECTURES.

2 COURSES on ANATOMY and PHYSIOLOGY.
2 — THEORY and PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.
2 — CHEMISTRY.
1 — MATERIA MEDICA.

HOSPITAL ATTENDANCE.

*6* MONTHS at *Guy's and St. Thomas's* —
as
MONTHS at
*168 Examined by Mr. Brande & approved.*"

Evidently Mr. Hammond bore Keats no ill-will, for he came forward with the necessary testimonial. The "six months," which were really nine, at Guy's and St. Thomas's would not have been allowed as adequate preparation for admission to the examination if the four years' apprentice-

[1] It was first published by Lord Houghton in his *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, 1848.

[2] *Literary By-Paths in Old England*, by Henry C. Shelley, contains a photograph of the original page.

ship to Mr. Hammond had not been added to them. This is quite evident from the entries in the Minute Book of the Court of Examiners of the Society of Apothecaries,[1] the first of which is: "John Keats attended and produced testimonials to the satisfaction of the Court, and was admitted to Examination," and the second, "Mr. Keats was examined by Mr. Brande, and the Court granted him the certificate for which he had applied." Everard Brande was one of the Court of Examiners of the Society of Apothecaries. He is not to be confused with the noted chemist, William Thomas Brande, who was, however, the Society's professor of chemistry and superintending chemical operator. William Thomas Brande was considered the best chemistry teacher in London. If Keats had been unlucky in serving under Mr. Lucas, he was eminently lucky in having, for two of his teachers, Astley Cooper and William Thomas Brande.

Here was Keats, then, licensed to practice as soon as he pleased. I am very sure, however, that by this time he was fully determined to do no such thing. He did not communicate his decision to Abbey until later, as we shall find out, but there was no need to take that step yet. Even Abbey could see the advisability of a vacation, and afterwards he would be so nearly of age that the placating of Abbey would not matter. His immediate concern was to put his diploma in his trunk and promptly forget all about hospitals and hospital studies. So Keats bade good-bye to his fellow students at Guy's and St. Thomas's, and went off to Margate, so far as we know, alone.

[1] Letter from William Wale, formerly Wills Librarian, Guy's Hospital, in the London *Times* for Tuesday, January 10, 1918.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CRYSTALLIZING OF INTENTION

It is usually supposed that Keats's decision to give up surgery dates from the late Autumn of 1817. A careful study of his mental outlook at Margate, and on his return to London, leads me to believe that the time should be advanced as I have stated in the last chapter. That his mind was fully made up long before he spoke to Abbey on the subject, an anecdote related by Abbey to Taylor and recorded in the letter so often quoted seems to prove. This anecdote will be given in due course.

Keats, at Margate, is all agog with the idea of being a poet. A poet with the whole strength and force of his energy, not merely a man who writes poetry. A man's chief interest must be in his vocation, not in his avocation. Keats believed himself to have sufficient ability to make his devoting himself to poetry worth while; he felt sufficient security in his financial affairs not to experience any qualms on the score of earning nothing. There he was grossly in error, as he would have known at once had he taken the trouble to ask a few questions. He had been spending steadily for five years without earning a penny. To meet the expenses of his surgical education, Abbey had been obliged to encroach upon his capital. A perfectly justifiable proceeding, had Keats lived up to his guardian's expectations and begun to practice as soon as he was qualified to do so. In that case, by Abbey's calculation, he would be able to pay himself back by degrees. The matter assumed a totally different complexion if there were to be no paying back. When Keats refused to fulfill what Abbey considered his obligations, that startled merchant either would not, or could not, make his financial

prospects clear to Keats. To this lack of understanding on Keats's part is due much of the misery of his later years.

Money affairs were as far from Keats's mind as surgery during his sojourn at Margate. Poetry was everything, he thought of nothing else. Margate was the brightest kind of experience, all shimmered over with beautiful words and beckoning visions. He did not yet know enough of the poetic life to consider its laboriousness and constant strain. At this juncture, he saw only the happiness of achievement. To be quit of surgery, able to give all the time he liked to receiving impressions and pouring them out in verse, there was joy greater than any he had ever known. He savoured it to the full, and with it came again the heightened sense of beauty and of personal contacts he had felt when he wrote the beginning of *I Stood Tip-toe*. At other times, before, he had known the fret of barrenness, had been afraid that his creative faculty had flown, but not now — now he can even comment on such moments, being filled with convincing purpose.

I am not imagining this, it is all given in his *Epistle to my Brother George*, which he wrote at Margate. But I cannot help thinking that, in point of time, his sonnet: *To my Brother George* precedes the *Epistle*. The sonnet is simpler and seems to voice a first reponse to his change of environment, whereas in the *Epistle* we are made aware of much cogitating, he has had time to do a deal of thinking about the high calling to which he is now dedicated. I will suppose that my theory of precedence is correct, and take the poems in order.

The sonnet is quite charming in its simplicity. It is just an expression of a mood, the mood of escape from drudgery, the mood of delighted impression. A transcript by George Keats is dated: "Margate, August, 1816," but through the poem itself we can add some details to the mere bald date. It is sunset, and Keats is sitting looking

at the ocean. Just to one side of the flaming sky, just beyond the edge of its fire, a little sickle moon is growing into light. It is all so beautiful that Keats immediately wishes that George were there to see it with him, and the wish is so strong that he writes the sonnet. He is not thinking of being a poet at that moment; he is thinking how magnificent the sky and sea are, and noticing the delicate touch given to the scene by the little faint moon. The sonnet begins:

"Many the wonders I this day have seen,"

and one feels that this is the clue to his feeling — wonder. Keats's observation is extraordinarily sure in this poem, and his words equal it. The sonnet is keen with the perfect combination of these two qualities. How excellent "feathery gold" is for sunset clouds! How thoroughly satisfactory his sea:

"The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears, —
Its voice mysterious."

The remarkable thing about this passage is that it not only paints the actual sea, but suggests all that the sea stands for to humanity, and this with no effect of overloading and spoiling the picture. It is admirably done. As an inherent colourist, Keats was much impressed by the colours of the sea. Here he has "its blue green"; better still is

"Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple and green"

in the *Epistle to George Keats*.

The sonnet is a sort of prelude to his sonnet *On the Sea*, written in the following year. The later poem is better, stronger, more serious and penetrating, but the *naïveté* of this earlier poem is very attractive. The moon passage is tinged with fancy:

"Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping
So scantly, that it seems her bridal night."

No clumsy artificiality here; merely the faintest flush of artifice. The wistfulness of the last two lines is scarcely even that, the slightest whiff of nostalgia playing over the remembrance of understanding companionship:

"But what, without the social thought of thee,
Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?"

His brother George came nearer to filling up the gap in Keats's heart than any of his friends ever did. The separation of the brothers, when George emigrated to America, tore the scheme of Keats's existence from end to end. By the time he had learnt to do without George, he was a different man.

The *Epistle to my Brother George* is again dated by George Keats, "Margate, August, 1816." The opening of the poem speaks of the depression induced by a period of unproductiveness. This is the characteristic poetic temper which Keats possessed in the extreme. It proves him as having considered himself apprenticed to the business of poetry for some time. But the depression is reminiscent, the immediate present holds no such feeling:

"But there are times, when those that love the bay,
Fly from all sorrowing far, far away;
A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see
In water, earth, or air, but poesy."

He goes on to tell of the visions beheld by poets in creative trances. To heighten his effect, Spenser and Hunt are again brought in in juxtaposition, somewhat as they are in the *Induction*, and again Hunt is "Libertas." The imagery of the poet's trance is very much that of *Calidore*, but this of the *Epistle* is distinctly more imaginative. For instance, the conception of sheet-lightning as being the

opening of the portal of a knightly castle in the sky is an original and pleasant fancy.

Two lines in the poem gave rise to an illuminating example of the limitations of critics:

> "And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar
> Pours with the lustre of a falling star."

Leigh Hunt found fault with this simile, which proves his lack of observation and Keats's discernment, also possibly Keats's good eyesight and Hunt's bad. For in August (the month of falling stars) one can often see a wake behind the dropping star.

Keats's preoccupation with the poetic life appears in a long passage put into the mouth of a dying poet, the gist of which is that no other life is half so important to the world and satisfying to the individual. This passage is really the voicing of his own ambition, and he goes on in his proper person:

> "...Ah, my dear friend and brother,
> Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother,
> For tasting joys like these, sure I should be
> Happier, and dearer to society.
> At times, 'tis true, I've felt relief from pain
> When some bright thought has darted through my brain:
> Through all that day I've felt a greater pleasure
> Than if I'd brought to light a hidden treasure.
> As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them,
> I feel delighted, still, that you should read them."

"Sonnets" may have been put in for the metre, or it may be that he cared particularly for his sonnets. This may seem odd when we remember that the only ones written at that time were *To Byron*, *On Peace*, *To Chatterton*, *On Leigh Hunt Leaving Prison*, *To a Young Lady who sent me a Laurel Crown*, *Sonnet to Solitude*, *On an Engraved Gem of Leander*, *Oh! how I love*, *To a Friend who sent me some Roses*, and *To one who has been long in city pent*, not one of which

ranks with his best sonnets. But, after all, think of the other poems done before August, 1816. Does one of them equal *Leander*, *City Pent*, or the *Sonnet to Solitude?* Keats was right, his best work up to this time, with the exception of *I Stood Tip-toe*, which was not finished, was in his sonnets.

It will be noticed that it is the autobiographical content of the *Epistle* which I have emphasized, not the poetical. I have done so because it is not until the end of the poem, where Keats describes the actual scene before his eyes as he writes, that the *Epistle* becomes poetically interesting. This description is among Keats's best, and it is important in another connection also, for here is the scenery which Keats was living with at Margate:

"E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers
Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades,
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats;
So pert and useless, that they bring to mind
The scarlet coats that pester human-kind.
And on the other side, outspread, is seen
Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and green.
Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now
Mark the bright silver curling round her prow
I see the lark down-dropping to his nest,
And the broad-winged sea-gull never at rest;
For when no more he spreads his feathers free,
His breast is dancing on the restless sea."

In spite of its inexpertness in several places, that passage is in the new, direct manner which Keats was just learning how to manage, the manner so well exemplified in the first part of *Tip-toe*. The chequering of his paper with the shadows of grass-blades is a repetition of the "youngling tree" in the earlier poem. Or was the "youngling

tree" a result of tinkering, owing its existence to the grass-blades?

No one can read this *Epistle*, I think, without realizing whither Keats was tending, and agreeing with my contention that surgery was now quite a thing of the past, an ancient nightmare dissolved and blown away.

Because of Keats's constant brooding over the career of poetry, I am emboldened to hazard a guess as to the date of an unpublished poem in the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library. Woodhouse says it was written "About 1815/6." 1815 it cannot be, on the face of it. Keats wrote in no such style in that year. I scarcely think it can have been written later than 1816, it is too youthful in expression. It must have been done early in Keats's writing life — the slight touch of bombast at the end proves that, also it does not fit with any of the remarks on poetic psychology given in his letters, and still less is it a companion piece in feeling or wording to *Where's the poet?* which, although we do not know where it should be placed, has the ironic flash Keats learnt to play with only much later. There seems every reason to suppose that this last poem was written about the time of Keats's letter to Woodhouse of October twenty-seventh, 1818, the tone of it is in perfect keeping with that letter, which the tone of this sonnet emphatically is not. *The Poet* has little merit, but in connection with the *Epistle to George Keats* it gains a certain reality and importance which it would otherwise lack:

"THE POET.

At Morn, at Noon, at Eve, and Middle Night,
  He passes forth into the charmed air,
  With talisman to call up spirits rare
From plant, cave, rock, and fountain. — To his sight
The hush of natural objects opens quite
  To the core: and every secret essence there
  Reveals the elements of good and fair;
Making him see, where Learning hath no light.

Sometimes, above the gross and palpable things
Of this diurnal ball, his spirit flies
On awful wing; and with its destined skies
Holds premature and mystic communings:
Till such unearthly intercourses shed
A visible halo round his mortal head."

The poem appears never to have been finished, for the word "sphere" is written above "ball," and the word "earth" is written below. "Earth" is scratched out, but "sphere" is left as a possible alternative. Also, in the last line, a choice is given between "mortal" and "living." These may quite well be Woodhouse's emendations and not Keats's at all, for Woodhouse was fond of trying his hand at such improvements.

The line:

"Making him see where Learning hath no light"

may reasonably refer to the heavy and uninspiring tomes on anatomy, chemistry, etc., which Keats had ached through for many a long year. To my mind, that line is fair evidence for placing the poem as written during the Margate sojourn. If this be the case, Keats was well advised in not allowing it to strut into the pages of the *Poems*, 1817. It would certainly have given the impression of an over-weening egotism on Keats's part that he was very far from feeling. Keats believed in his destiny as a poet, but not with his hat put on sideways and his nose in the air. If ever a man pursued his course with humble confidence, that man was John Keats. He never identified himself with the poet of this sonnet, obviously; this poet was a generality, the ideal practicant of the noblest of all arts, which was what Keats conceived the great masters to have been. But a censorious world would assuredly have read the poem otherwise, and *Blackwood's* would have had another handle to twist upon.

We have no exact data as to how long Keats stayed at

Margate, but in a poem written to Charles Cowden Clarke and subscribed "September, 1816," he speaks of it being "some weeks" since he last saw the steeples of London reflected in the Thames. Although we have no definite knowledge that Keats wrote more at Margate than the sonnet and *Epistle* to his brother George, there is no reason to suppose that he left it for any other place before returning to town. By this calculation, the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke* ranks as a Margate poem, and allowing the placing of *The Poet* in this category, gives us four poems done during August and September, or, at least, during a part of those months. He may have been away a month in all, he may have been away two. However long he was at Margate, I do not believe that these four poems represent all the work he did there. Of those poems which we know to have been written in 1816, a few give no hint as to the month we should ascribe them to; none of these, however, seem to fit in with the Margate vacation. Yet it is reasonably certain that Keats was intermittently at work all the time he was at Margate. Probably he was revising the much-worked-over *I Stood Tip-toe* and adding little pieces to it, and he may very likely have been altering the *Induction* and *Calidore*. But we must also suppose that he was doing an immense amount of mere day-dreaming. There was a great deal to think about; for instance, there was the inevitable conversation with Abbey, which was undoubtedly rehearsed again and again, with "He will say" and "I will say" in a never ending chain of repetitions and in every possible shade of tone on Keats's part, running the gamut from persuasion through indifference to defiance. There were also innumerable castles in Spain to build, in which Keats saw himself as the author of another *Faerie Queene*, or another *King Lear*; and there were long hours of reading, of course, with the books and the dreams all muddled up together. It can scarcely have been otherwise. Keats was an introspective man, he tried to know himself, and finally in a great measure succeeded.

All this soul searching and castle building was fatiguing, and there is evidence of fatigue in the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*. Fatigue of spirit, that is, for as an autobiographic and psychologic record we can trust it implicitly. The more Keats goes over his past life, the greater he feels his debt to Clarke to be, and it becomes a kind of duty to write something specifically addressed to the friend who has done so much for him. The poem is a catalogue of boons received. He can hardly write to Clarke in the same strain of egoistic enthusiasm which he permits himself with his brother. Clarke is his friend; but he is also, in many ways, his mentor. If the eight years between them are dwindling, still he cannot think of Clarke without being conscious of how very far he is from realizing his own dreams as yet. Besides, September is not August, and the self-communings have shorn away a good deal of his colt-let-out-in-a-meadow sort of excitement. His awareness of his own shortcomings in the beginning of the poem is very touching. The *Epistle to Clarke* starts clumsily enough with a simile of a swan striving to save the drops of water he spatters upon his feathers, and Keats exclaims:

> "Just like that bird am I in loss of time
> When e'er I venture on the stream of rhyme
> . . . . .
> Still scooping up the water with my fingers,
> In which a trembling diamond never lingers."

*Never* lingers! That sounds uncommonly like depression. Has Keats been having a little encounter with his abiding blue devils? No, I think they have no more than fanned him with their bat-like wings here in Margate, but reaction from the high tension of August was inevitable.

Following the swan simile, Keats proceeds to relate it:

> "By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see
> Why I have never penn'd a line to thee:
> Because my thoughts were never free, and clear,

And little fit to please a classic ear;
Because my wine was of too poor a savour
For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour
Of sparkling Helicon."

The inference is not that his thoughts are now clear, for I suppose they had seldom been more confused, but that he can no longer delay this duty of obligation. Helicon leads to a literary catalogue which is interesting only because it shows the kind of books with which Keats had become familiar, largely through Clarke. They are Tasso, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. Sandwiched in between Shakespeare and Milton is Hunt, who is ushered in in the worst tea-table verse:

"One, who, of late, had ta'en sweet forest walks
With him who elegantly chats, and talks —
The wrong'd Libertas, — who has told you stories
Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories;
Or troops chivalrous prancing through a city,
And tearful ladies made for love, and pity."

Keats had no thought of irony when he wrote these lines, but no malicious pen-driver could have stumbled on a more apt and damning description of Hunt than Keats's "him who elegantly talks." To a man who, like Clarke, has communed with all these great ones, what can there be in his, Keats's, poetry — that is the gist of the passage. Nor would Keats address him now

"But that I've known you long;
That you first taught me all the sweets of song."

And he proceeds to describe the various kinds of poetry in a manner which proves that, whatever Clarke taught, Keats had *learnt* a great deal. Here is his happy delineation of Spenser's style:

"Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,
And float along like birds o'er summer seas."

There is no better description of the "wind-back" sonnet than:

> "Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly
> Up to its climax and then dying proudly."

No wonder his friends believed in his future, a boy so sensitive as this to poetic *nuances*! This man has an intellect, he can not only feel, he can analyze his sensations and put the causes of them under a microscope. This is inspirational criticism, there is no other word for it.

Ode, epigram, epic, follow next, and then comes this passage:

> "You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty,
> And pointed out the patriot's stern duty;
> The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell;
> The hand of Brutus."

Notice that the patriots, King Alfred and William Tell, are the same as in the *Epistle to George Felton Matthew*, and that William Wallace, in the first poem, has given place to Brutus in the last; whereas Sydney, Russell, and Vane are the patriots in *Lines on the Anniversary of Charles II's Restoration*, while Sydney is again mentioned in connection with "patriotic love" in the sonnet *Oh! how I love.*

Up to line 84, the poem has been a *tour de force*, something he wanted to write from a grateful sense of duty. Here is the circumstance in a nutshell:

> "... When many lines I'd written,
> Though with their grace I was not oversmitten,
> Yet, as my hand was warm, I thought I'd better
> Trust to my feelings, and write you a letter.
> Such an attempt requir'd an inspiration
> Of a peculiar sort, — a consummation; —
> Which, had I felt, these scribblings might have been
> Verses from which the soul would never wean."

So we see that he had been writing "many lines" at Mar-

gate; we also see that, in spite of the passage on poetry, he was not in vein — was, in fact, tired.

With the eighty-fourth line, Keats begins to describe the country he is living with. It is not so good a description as that in the *Epistle to George Keats*, but it is important as proof of what I have said was his state of mind. He was simply aching for just the type of scenery to be found at Margate. He had to get it. He went to Margate in a kind of thirst, and satisfied himself with the sights, the sounds, the smells, all the things which London, even Hampstead, could not give him. These bursts of desire for a particular kind of place were usual with Keats throughout his life. Sensitiveness to atmosphere was one of his most marked traits. Here is the story:

> "Some weeks have pass'd since last I saw the spires
> In lucent Thames reflected: — warm desires
> To see the sun o'erpeep the eastern dimness,
> And morning shadows streaking into slimness
> Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water;
> To mark the time as they grow broad, and shorter;
> To feel the air that plays about the hills,
> And sip its freshness from the little rills;
> To see high, golden corn wave in the light
> When Cynthia smiles upon a summer's night,
> And peers among the cloudlets jet and white,
> As though she were reclining in a bed
> Of bean blossoms, in heaven freshly shed.
> No sooner had I stepp'd into these pleasures
> Than I began to think of rhymes and measures:
> The air that floated by me seem'd to say
> 'Write! thou wilt never have a better day.'
> And so I did."

Note the observation of the morning shadows "streaking into slimness," and his marking the time by their growing broader and shorter. Note the moon among black and white clouds; here is Keats the colourist in full swing. I can recall no other line in poetry where the black and

white of moon clouds is given. At this period, in passages like these, Keats is boyish, but all himself.

The end of the poem is a reminiscence of his school-days and the years at the Edmonton surgery.

It seems strange that, with all the writing which Keats says he has done, so few poems appear to have been written. A possibility is that both the *Induction* and *Calidore* were written at Margate, but I reject this idea for the reason that the manner of those poems is not the manner of the ones we know to have been done there. Except for the one passage in the *Epistle to George Keats* which I have already pointed out, there is no suggestion of either the imagery or the diction of the *Induction* and *Calidore* in any of them. On the contrary, they approach much more nearly to the style of *I Stood Tip-toe*.

The countryside had done its work. Already, in the Cowden Clarke poem, we feel that Keats is through with it, and not averse to the change back to town. When he left Margate is uncertain, but probably we shall be right in concluding that it was not later than the middle of September.

Where did Keats go on his return to London? That has recently become a mooted question owing to the researches of Mr. Louis A. Holman. Clarke is the authority for the belief that Keats left St. Thomas's Street to lodge with his brothers in the Poultry. Clarke describes these lodgings with some minuteness. They were, he says, "on the second floor of a house in the Poultry, over the passage leading to the Queen's Head Tavern, and opposite to one of the City Companies' halls — the Ironmongers, if I mistake not." Mr. Holman has recorded[1] that no place answering to this description can be found in the Poultry, but that it is quite accurate for a certain part of Cheapside. The Keats brothers did live in Cheapside, but the removal there cannot have taken place much before the twentieth

[1] The Boston *Transcript*.

of November, as in a letter to Haydon of that date Keats puts as a postscript: "Removed to 76 Cheapside." Mr. Holman's argument is as follows:

> "What Clarke intended to say was 'rooms in *Cheapside*, over a passage leading to the Queen's *Arms* Tavern.' This is evident from his further statement that the lodgings were opposite 'one of the City Companies' Halls.' Opposite the entrance to the Mercers' Hall we find Bird-in-Hand Court, Cheapside, leading to the Queen's Arms Tavern. Clarke further shows that he had confused the Poultry with Cheapside, when a little later he has Keats remove directly from these lodgings, which he again speaks of as being in 'the Poultry,' to Hampstead."

Mr. Holman would seem to have made his point that Clarke had the Cheapside lodging in mind when he wrote, and his argument is greatly strengthened by the fact that Mercers' Hall is at the corner of Ironmonger Lane; but, even so, that does not prove that there was not an earlier lodging in the Poultry.

Cheapside runs into the Poultry, and that a person recollecting over thirty years later should have confused the two is not surprising. Cornelius Webb wrote in a copy of the *Poems*, 1817, which he says was given him by Keats, that, at the time the book was published, Keats was living "in lodgings near the Poultry," and we know that when the *Poems* came out Keats was living at 76 Cheapside. Still I do not think that that disposes of a possible Poultry lodging entirely. On the contrary, I am inclined to adopt the usually accepted view that there were two lodgings. To explain my reasons for this belief, I must shift the ground of the argument.

George Keats, writing to Dilke in 1824,[1] says: "Between the time of John's leaving the surgeon and his coming of age he and Tom (who had been with Mr. Abbey and left

[1] Author's Collection. Quoted by Buxton Forman, Library Edition. Vol. IV.

him) spent 3 times their incomes." As Tom was not yet sixteen at the time of Keats's move from Edmonton to London, he cannot have been long in Abbey's employ. Suppose that he left school when he was fifteen, as John did, or even, following George's example, when he was fourteen, he went directly to Abbey's. The later age is more likely than the earlier, for we know that it was ill health which caused him to leave, and he could scarcely have found out that he could not stand the confinement of a desk under some months' trial. Where did he go? In one of George Keats's letters to Dilke,[1] George speaks of Abbey's advancing money to Tom "when Tom went to Lyons." We know nothing of this journey except this single mention, but it seems very probable that it occurred just at this time. Tom's going there was undoubtedly due to an impression that Lyons, being so far South of Paris, would be warm. Supposing that Tom tried Lyons, his stay there was evidently of the shortest, yet even a short sojourn would account for a certain period after he had left Abbey's and before John had quitted the hospital. This supposition is the more plausible, because for Abbey to have permitted a ward of fifteen or so to go into lodgings all by himself seems ridiculous. Also, would John have left Tom alone for the better part of a year while he himself lived with a set of none-too-congenial fellow students in another part of the town? I think not. The Poultry was not such an everlasting distance from the Borough as to make it impossible for John to have reached the hospital with a little effort. Owing to these considerations, we are undoubtedly right in assuming that, after Tom's departure from Abbey's counting-house, he went to Lyons, from whence he returned in the Spring or early Summer of 1816. That by this time Tom was "on his own" and in constant need of money, is shown by a draft of a letter

[1] Author's Collection.

to Abbey in a pocket-book [1] which Tom used at this time:

> "John lent me 5£ on the 4th inst. according to your desire for which I am much obliged. I have only 1£ this morning I shall soon want more at your convenience I will thank you to give some to George for me and he will enclose it. I hope Mrs. and Miss Abbey are well I beg my respects to them and my love to Fanny."

This letter tells us many things. First, that George was still living at Abbey's business quarters in Pancras Lane which he left not long after; second, that Abbey was unequal to the sacrifice of having Tom at his Walthamstow house; third, that Tom was seeing John constantly; fourth, that Tom needed a good deal of money, presumably chiefly to pay his keep. The letter is not dated, but it is jotted down only one item removed from a copy of Keats's sonnet to George from Margate. The item which divides them has some importance because of its date. It is: "2 shirts, 4 cravats, 2 pair socks, 1 P.N.H. Hank, 1 Flannel Waist." Is this a washing-list? Possibly, but for whom? It also may be a memorandum of things to put into a valise. The date is July twenty-fourth and Keats's examination was on the twenty-fifth. Is this note — washing-list or memorandum — preparation for the trip to Margate? If so, it looks as though Keats were already living with Tom, and that may have been the case. I notice that Professor de Sélincourt, on what authority I do not know, puts Keats's removal to the Poultry as occurring in either June or July. My only reason for disbelieving this is that it appears improbable that Keats would make such a change with his examination so short a time away and with the Margate excursion in view. A question obtrudes itself — why did not he take Tom with him? The answer may be that Tom's finances were not

[1] Day Collection.

equal to such a jaunt. As to his leaving Tom alone, I can only say that he left him alone when he went on his Scotch tour, and Tom was a very sick man in the Summer of 1818. In 1816, he was probably not sick at all, merely too frail to continue in his position with Abbey. It may pertinently be asked why I think Tom was not with him at Margate. The answers to this question are two. The first of them is to be found in the last two lines of his sonnet *To my Brother George*:

> "But what, without the social thought of thee,
> Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?"

If Tom were with him, he would not need to invoke a "social thought" for an absent person, his nostalgia for George would have been expressed differently. The "wonders of the sky and sea" need companionship to complete them, and such companionship is not at hand, as it would have been had Tom been there. The second answer is the evidence of a letter written to Hunt in May 1817, in which he speaks of his Margate quarters as "my old lodging" not "our old lodging."

The final reason on which I base my conclusion that Tom was alone, or with a friend, until after Keats's return from Margate, is just the removal to Cheapside in November. For may not that change of lodging be due to the fact of George's joining his brothers? Possibly the Poultry quarters were not big enough for three. If John had gone back to St. Thomas's Street on returning to London, would he have stayed there a whole month after he came of age and was his own master? Nobody has ever suggested this, and I think it most improbable. The Cheapside move was not made until late November. If Keats were still at St. Thomas's Street, his sending the sonnet on Chapman's *Homer* to Clarke in Clerkenwell in time for Clarke to receive it at ten o'clock, when the two had only parted at "day-spring," would have been a distinct feat.

Whereas, although quick work, if he only had to go to the Poultry there would be ample time for him to walk "composing as he went, and to commit his draft to paper and send it to Clerkenwell by ten o'clock."[1]

A long digression, this, but I fear a necessary one. It has, perhaps, proved nothing; but it does, at least, throw a very strong weight on the probability that when Keats returned from Margate he returned to the Poultry and to Tom.

Coming back to London meant coming back to Clarke and the rest of his friends. It also meant the resumption of the Hampstead walks, and the eager, fortifying talks at Hunt's house in the Vale of Health. Keats threw himself into these pleasures with an ardour which could not have left much room for the pursuit of his medical studies. Probably he resumed his hospital and lecture attendance in a fitful way, Abbey would have seen to that, for it was still a full month before he was to come of age. His distaste for surgery can have been no secret to his friends for some time, however successfully he may have concealed it from Abbey. Cowden Clarke relates a conversation which he had with Keats before his examination. Clarke, seeing Keats so absorbed by poetry, enquired how he was going to make such absorption fit with the practice of surgery. Keats promptly answered that he disliked the study of anatomy as a main pursuit, and that, feeling so, he was unsuited to be a surgeon. In illustration of his attitude, he said, "The other day, for instance, during the lecture, there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairy-land."

It was quite customary for holders of an apothecary's certificate to return to the hospital and resume both their duties as dressers and their attendance at lectures. The twelvemonth's term for which Keats had entered himself

[1] Colvin.

in the previous March was still in operation, and Abbey was too thrifty a soul to wish Keats to part with his money and not get his money's worth. So Keats bided his time, and mum was the word as far as Abbey was concerned.

Some time in October, Keats had an experience. He was booked to spend the evening with Clarke, and accordingly wended his way to Clerkenwell. He found Clarke in high good humour over the loan of a book. It was Chapman's translation of Homer in the folio edition of 1616. Keats was a true booklover, delighting almost as much as Lamb in old calf-bound folios. Later, in 1818, we find him rejoicing over the purchase of a black-letter Chaucer. The 1616 Chapman's *Homer* is a sumptuous volume, with one of the engraved architectural title-pages so dear to the heart of the seventeenth century bibliophile. This particular copy had been lent to Clarke by a Mr. Alsager who conducted the money-market department in the *Times*. Alsager was one of Hunt's admirers, and he and Clarke had made each other's acquaintance while dancing attendance upon their idol in the Horsemonger Lane prison.

Neither Clarke nor Keats had ever read Chapman's translation of Homer; what knowledge they had of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was derived from Pope. Down they sat, says Clarke, and turned to the "'famousest passages' . . . for instance, that perfect scene of the conversation on Troy Wall of the old Senators with Helen, who is pointing out to them the several Greek Captains." The description of these old senators is just the kind of passage which Keats would be likely to be struck by:

"All graue old men; and soldiers they had bene, but for age
Now left the warres; yet Counsellors, they were exceeding sage.
And, as in well-growne woods, on trees, cold spiny Grasshoppers
Sit chirping, and send voices out, that scarce can pierce our eares

For softness and their weak faint sounds; so, talking on the tower,
These seniors of the people sate."

This is only the beginning, the whole scene is too long to quote. Clarke especially mentions "the Senator Antenor's vivid portrait of an orator in Ulysses":

"But when out of his ample breast he gaue his great voice passe,
And words that flew about our eares, like drifts of winter's snow;
None thenceforth, might contend with him; though naught admird for show."

Another passage cited by Clarke is that of "the shield and helmet of Diomed, with the accompanying simile":

"From his bright helme and shield, did burne, a most vnwearied fire:
Like rich Autumnus golden lampe, whose brightnesse men admire,
Past all the other host of starres, when with his chearefull face,
Fresh washt in loftie Ocean waues, he doth his skies enchase."

And still another, called by Clarke, "the prodigious description of Neptune's passage to the Achive ships":

"But this security in Ioue, the great Sea-Rector spied,
Who sate aloft on th' vtmost top, of shadie Samothrace,
And viewd the fight. His chosen seate, stood in so braue a place,
That Priams cittie, th' Achiue ships, all Ida did appeare,
To his full view; who from the sea, was therefore seated there.
He tooke much ruth, to see the Greeks, by Troy, sustaine such ill,
And (mightily incensed with Ioue) stoopt straight from that steepe hill;
That shooke as he flew off: so hard, his parting prest the height.
The woods, and all the great hils neare, trembled beneath the weight

Of his immortall mouing feet: three steps he onely tooke,
Before he far-off Ægas reacht; but with the fourth, it shooke
With his drad entrie. In the depth, of those seas, he did hold
His bright and glorious pallace built, of neuer-rusting gold;
And there arriu'd, he put in Coach, his brazen-footed steeds,
All golden man'd, and pac't'with wings; and all in golden weeds
He cloth'd himself. The golden scourge, (most elegantly done)
He tooke, and mounted to his seate: and then the God begun
To driue his chariot through the waues. From whirlpits euery way
The whales exulted vnder him, and knew their king: the Sea
For ioy did open; and his horse, so swift, and lightly flew:
The vnder-axeltree of Brasse, no drop of water drew.
And thus, these deathlesse Coursers brought, their king to th' Achiue ships."

This whole picture must have been a breathless excitement to Keats. Hitherto Pope had been all he knew of Homer. Chapman's version is concrete, Pope's is general. Keats did not love the general. No man ever gloried in minute descriptions more than he. There was tonic and healing to him in the sweeping vigour of Chapman. Careless of finicky niceties, relying only upon an infinite gusto, this honest, swaggering, extraordinarily masculine kind of poetry must have been like a great puff of wind swishing across a room full of trifling knick-knacks, knocking them off the tables, twisting them about, swirling the pictures from the walls, and filling the stagnant, scented air with a rush of inconsequence. Something was needed to tip *Rimini* off the table of Keats's mind — *Rimini*, and the false beauty it stood for. Virile old Chapman was the very one to do it. Not all at once, but gradually. If any one would have a grateful task, let him track Keats's indebtedness to Chapman's *Homer*. There is an ample field and practically unexplored.

Before I leave these passages which Clarke says gave

Keats particular pleasure, I must quote the last. Clarke recalls it in these words: "One scene I could not fail to introduce him to — the shipwreck of Ulysses, in the fifth book of the 'Odyssies' where Ulysses is cast up on the shores of Phæacia, and I had the reward of one of his delightful stares upon reading the following lines":

> "Then forth he came, his both knees faltring; both
> His strong hands hanging downe; and all with froth
> His cheeks and nosthrils flowing. Voice and breath
> Spent all to vse; and downe he sunke to Death.
> The sea had soakt his heart through: all his vaines
> His toiles had rackt, t'a labouring woman's paines.
> Dead weary was he."

Clarke italicizes "the sea had soakt his heart through," as though it were just as he read those words that Keats stared. Clarke says that on an "after-occasion" he showed Keats the corresponding passage in Pope's version:

> "From mouth and nose the briney torrent ran,
> And lost in lassitude lay all the man."

Keats probably recollected this comparison when he wrote of the

> ". . . musty laws lined out with wretched rule
> And compass vile"

a few months later, in *Sleep and Poetry*.

All night long, these enthusiastic young persons read, and it was nearly dawn before Keats could tear himself away. We can imagine Clarke's surprise, therefore, when at ten o'clock the next morning he received a note from Keats which turned out to be a sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*.

Two manuscripts of this sonnet are in existence, one [1] is evidently a first draft, the other [2] is probably the copy

[1] Author's Collection. [2] Morgan Collection.

sent to Clarke. In the draft, Keats has drawn lines down the side to remind himself where the rhymes came. Homer is "low-brow'd," not "deep-brow'd"; Cortez's eyes are not "eagle," but "wond'ring"; and the seventh line reads: "Yet could I never tell what men could mean," which Clarke says he eventually changed because he considered it "bald and too simply wondering." This may have been one reason, but there were probably three others: first, the repetition of the word "could"; second, the awkward effect of the consonants — too many "n's" — and the reiteration of the short "e" in "never," "tell," and "men"; and still a third, the sameness of the rhyme sound in "demesne" and "mean." The substituted line, as everybody knows, is:

"Yet did I never breathe its pure serene."

A most interesting suggestion in regard to the curious expression "pure serene" has recently been made by Mr. Paget Toynbee. His remarks, in part, I will give in his own words:

> [1] "The phrase 'pure serene,' which is not to be found in Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden (so far as I am aware), or Pope, occurs in Cary's translation of the 'Paradiso' . . .
>
> *'Lumé non è, se non vien dal sereno*
> *Che non si turba mai'* —
>
> which Cary renders:
>
> '. . . Light is none,
> Save that which cometh from the pure serene
> Of ne'er disturbed ether."
>
> It will be noted that Cary's epithet 'pure' has no equivalent in the original . . .
>
> Cary's 'Dante' had been published in January, 1814, in

[1] Letter from Paget Toynbee in the London *Times Literary Supplement*, June 16, 1921.

the diminutive edition in three volumes, a copy of which Keats carried in a corner of his knapsack on his tour in the north in the summer of 1818.

If my surmise is correct Keats's acquaintance with Cary's 'Dante' must have begun at a somewhat earlier date than is usually assumed."

It has hitherto been supposed that Keats's introduction to Dante came through Bailey. But, even if that were virtually the case, it is quite possible that Hunt has read him a passage or two out of Cary before. Certainly there is more than coincidence in Keats's repetition of Cary's exact words. I think it extremely likely that he came across Cary's phrase after writing his sonnet, and during the time that he was puzzling his head how to better his erring seventh line.

The simile in the sestet is a reminiscence of a passage in Robertson's *History of America*, which Clarke has told us was in the school library at Enfield. This book seems to have interested Keats very much, we find him reading it again in April, 1819. Keats confused Balboa with Cortez, as Tennyson pointed out to Palgrave, but Keats's friends do not seem to have noticed the mistake. Hunt, in *Imagination and Fancy*, refers to Titian's portrait of Cortez, and says "his 'eagle eyes' are from life, as may be seen by Titian's portrait of him." Keats may have known the portrait, or not, but at any rate he put Cortez, probably by accident. It is no matter. The passage in Robertson which gave him his picture is this:

"At length the Indians assured them, that from the top of the next mountain they should discover the ocean which was the object of their wishes. When, with infinite toil, they had climbed up the greater part of that steep ascent, Balboa commanded his men to halt, and advanced alone to the summit, that he might be the first who should enjoy a spectacle which he had so long desired. As soon as he beheld the South Sea stretching in endless prospect below

him, he fell on his knees, and lifting up his hands to heaven, returned thanks to God, who had conducted him to a discovery so beneficial to his country, and so honourable to himself. His followers, observing his transports of joy, rushed forward to join in his wonder, exultation, and gratitude."

The late Dr. Richard Garnett suggested as another source for Keats's simile a note in Wordsworth's *Excursion*.[1] It was taken from the notes to a poem by William Gilbert called the *Hurricane:*

"A man is supposed to improve by going out into tne *World*, by visiting *London*. Artificial man does; he extends with his sphere; but, alas! that sphere is microscopic; it is formed of minutiæ, and he surrenders his genuine vision to the artist, in order to embrace it in *his ken* . . . The reverse is the Man of Mind . . . he would certainly be swallowed up by the first *Pizarro* that crossed him. But when he walks along the river of Amazons; when he rests his eye on the unrivalled Andes; when he measures the long and watered savannah; or *contemplates, from a sudden promontory, the distant vast Pacific*, — and feels himself a freeman in this vast theatre and commanding each ready produced fruit of this wilderness, and each progeny of this stream — his exaltation is not less than imperial."

The use of the word "ken" in this passage, and in the sonnet, is the striking thing here. Keats knew the *Excursion* well, and he may have read the notes, but even so, there is no such vivid flash to this picture as there is to Robertson's. And Robertson's mention of Balboa's followers, so carefully preserved by Keats, seems to make his passage the far more likely original of Keats's lines, although the suggestion in the note that it was the "Man of Mind" who was exalted by these things must have been a taking one to Keats. The truth is, probably, that the

[1] *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt. 4th Edition.

initial idea came from Robertson, touched up and augmented by a recollection of the note in the *Excursion*. Keats's passage has another debt — to Shakespeare, for his lines in the *Rape of Lucrece:*

> "Enchanted Tarquin answers with surmise
> In silent wonder of still-gazing eyes."

Perhaps poor old Bonnycastle's *Astronomy*, Keats's prize book for 1811, may have been responsible for the planet.

Few poems show more clearly than this sonnet how the creative faculty works. Even after the thunders of Chapman, Keats cannot quite forego a taste of fancy, the mythological fancy so dear to him. A man does not change his form of speech in one night. Hunt's lily-handed ladies and sighing wooers are tipped off the table for the nonce, but Apollo comes back from an earlier period to take his neophyte by the hand. Cary's phrase, being an afterthought, we may dismiss; but at this point in the poem in strides Chapman himself in the words, "loud and bold." The simile of the Pacific is lying in Keats's mind, waiting for use, and the Sea-Rector's journey, bringing the ocean up before him, lets it loose; while Bonnycastle may (and not too imaginatively reckoned so, I think) have been lying on his table and happened to catch his eye, although, considering that he has been walking home with the dawn stars paling over his head, he scarcely needed anyone's astronomy to father the thought of a planet.

Out of whatever bits and tittles of thought and memory Keats made his sonnet, he made a superb thing. The whole poem is so much more mature and finished in its execution than anything which had preceded it that the difference is astonishing. The success it met with in the Keats circle must have clinched his resolve to free himself from surgery without delay.

The birthday came and passed, and Abbey began to think with a certain concreteness of the future. Keats's paid

twelvemonth would be up in March, and it behooved a careful guardian to look about and see what could be done in the way of establishing his ward in a practice. If Abbey were no longer a legal guardian, he was, and would remain for a considerable time, a trustee. His enquiries on John's behalf produced an opening at Tottenham. The tale of the upsetting of his plans is the pleasantest passage in his revelations to Taylor.[1] I will give it exactly as Taylor wrote it to Woodhouse:

> "John was apprenticed to a Surgeon at Edmonton, who did not however conduct himself as Mr. A. conceived he ought to have done to his young Pupil,[2] and partly to punish him by the Opposition, — partly because Mrs. Jennings was known and respected in the Neighborhood, on which account her Grandson had a better Introduction there than elsewhere, it was Mr. Abbey's advice that John commence business at Tottenham as a Surgeon. He communicated his Plans to his Ward, but his Surprise was not moderate, to hear in Reply, that he did not intend to be a Surgeon. Not intend to be a Surgeon! why what do you mean to be? I mean to rely upon my Ability as a Poet — John, you are either Mad or a Fool, to talk in so absurd a Manner. My Mind is made up, said the youngster very quietly. I know that I possess abilities greater than most men, and therefore I am determined to gain my living by exercising them, Seeing nothing could be done Abbey called him a Silly Boy, and prophesied a speedy Termination to his inconsiderate Enterprise. — He brought in not Long after, says that worthy man, a little Book which he had got printed. I took it and said that I would look at it because it was his writing, otherwise I should not have troubled my head with any such Thing. When we next met I said, Well John I have read your Book, and it reminds me of the Quaker's Horse which was hard to catch, and good for nothing when caught. So your Book is hard to understand and good for nothing when it is understood.

[1] Abbey Memoir. Author's Collection.

[2] This seems to have been an error, see Vol. I, p. 154.

> Do you know, says the old Man, I don't think he ever forgave me for uttering this Opinion, which however was the Truth."

Keats's determination to live by his abilities, and his certainty of being able to do so, must have seemed the merest rhodomontade to the prudent coffee merchant; and Keats, quiet though he may have been, undoubtedly met Abbey's suggestions with a square-jawed obstinacy which nothing could move. Keats was as far as possible from being a boastful fellow, but he knew he had powers and he would have been a fool if he had not known it, also, a sneering opposition is of all others the very thing to produce a corresponding self-assertion. Granting every possible allowance for the annoyance which a man who has done his best and sees his plans frustrated naturally feels, Abbey certainly expressed himself with a tactlessness which, if not caused by downright stupidity, was unkind to the point of brutality. It was not so much a case of Keats never having forgiven him. The relations between the two men were shattered past any question of forgiveness by Abbey's attitude. By temperament, training, and natural abilities, they were as far asunder as two men can be. I think it is fair to say that Keats loathed Abbey from that moment, if, in fact, he had not done so before. And Abbey misunderstood and distrusted Keats, even going so far as to fear his influence for his young sister Fanny. As Abbey's trusteeship would not terminate until Fanny Keats came of age, or not until eight years later, in 1824, he and John were kept in constant communication, an intercourse calculated to renew their mutual irritation every so often, particularly as John only wrote or called to ask for advances of money or request some indulgence for his sister which Abbey was loath to grant.

An experience which Keats did not tell Abbey had clinched his resolve to abandon surgery. One day Keats

was called upon to open a man's temporal artery. He performed the operation skilfully, but with a wandering mind. "I did it with the utmost nicety," he told a friend later, "but on reflecting on what had passed through my mind at the time, my dexterity seemed a miracle, and I never took up the lancet again."

About this time, another unpleasantness in regard to the Keats children and Abbey occurred. Abbey had a junior partner named Hodgkinson. All that we know of him is that on some occasion he behaved with insolence to George Keats, or, at least, George thought he did, and his brothers adopted his view. So long after as the Summer of 1819, John tells Fanny that he cannot bear even to write Hodgkinson's name. This was extreme, of course, but all Keats's reactions were extreme, and particularly those contingent upon any rudeness to his brothers. George was a high-spirited fellow, a little over much so, in fact; he and his brothers called it pride, a more worldly-wise and less prejudiced person might have called it folly. The rise from one class into another is not accomplished without some loss. The Keats boys had done well for themselves socially, but there is evidence, here and there, that at times they had got a little above themselves, as the homely saying is. This was so in these early years, at any rate.

What Hodgkinson did or said is nowhere stated, but out George flounced, hugging his pride and putting all his chances for life in jeopardy. Yet his action brought about no such break with Abbey as Keats suffered. Abbey seems to have sat on the fence in the matter. He did not sever his partnership with Hodgkinson, and he did not force George, who was still under age, to remain in his employ. George left, and the three brothers moved to new lodgings at 76 Cheapside. The move was already accomplished by the twentieth of November, as we have seen.[1]

[1] See Vol. I, p. 171.

Keats, meanwhile, was in the first flush and heyday of life and spirits. He made friends easily, and thoroughly enjoyed them. Indeed, there was something winning about the man which has persisted even across the gulf of death. His publisher, Taylor, when sending a copy of *Endymion* to Sir James Mackintosh, apologizes for telling him so many details of the poet's life, but adds, "If you knew him, you would also feel that odd personal interest in all that concerns him." Any one who comes near Keats feels it even to-day, as the list of searchers into the details of all his doings bears witness.

The passage I have quoted from the Abbey Memoir relates two conversations occurring some time apart. What Abbey speaks of as "a short time" was really some months. I am persuaded, however, that the first conversation occurred very soon after Keats's first meeting with the Olliers, his first publishers, which took place in November. The second conversation must have been early in March. The Memoir itself is dated "20 April 1827," and was undoubtedly written immediately after the talk between Taylor and Abbey which it records and while Abbey's words were fresh in Taylor's mind. At that time, Taylor and Woodhouse were collecting materials for a brief biography of Keats, a plan which fell through.

I presume, for how could it have been otherwise, that Keats, having turned down the proposition of the Tottenham surgery, turned down with it his lingering connection with the hospitals and his fellow students at those institutions. What most of his friends guessed, and some of them knew, everybody was now to witness. Good-bye to the dingy Borough and all it signified. That was the end of that. But Keats had made some warm, if now necessarily to be abandoned, friends at St. Thomas's Street. Henry Stephens cared enough about him to copy the whole of his *Poems*, 1817 into a blank book. To him we owe two bits of doggerel, *Wine, Women and Snuff*,[1] scribbled by Keats in

[1] See Vol. I, p. 88.

one of Stephen's note-books, and a joke sonnet, *Before he went to feed with owls and bats*. Since we have no clue to what the sonnet refers, we lose the joke; but I cannot help thinking that it is connected with Keats's giving up his career as a surgeon. Doubt has been cast upon the authenticity of this sonnet, but as Woodhouse refers[1] to it in an account of a conversation which had taken place at a dinner at a Mr. F. Salmon's, the doubt may be laid.

Keats, then, is no longer at the parting of the ways, where he has been lingering in fact, if not in fancy, ever since receiving his diploma; he has at last turned definitely down the road to poetry. The stuff of his life is now to be, to outward seeming, friendship and all that friendship may bring; the inner fibre is to be poetry, books, and the thousand answerless questions which were always proposing themselves to his brain.

His circle of friends was increasing almost daily, and as Keats had the happy faculty of amalgamating one set of friends with another, he was not teased by psychological dislocations. First, there were the friends he had derived from his brother George either directly or indirectly. Second, there was the Hunt contingent, and, in the late Summer and Autumn of 1816, these were far the most important.

The intimacy with Hunt had been steadily growing ever since Keats's return from Margate. Fun and fancy, frolic and earnest, with endless readings and discussions — Hunt's intimates ran the gamut of these. Keats was enchanted with the whole atmosphere, and was constantly running out to Hampstead to enjoy it. Hunt's house was small, and overflowing with his family, but his hospitality was such that he could always stretch bed and board to take in a friend. Sometimes, when the evening chat had prolonged itself to a very late hour, Keats would spend the night in an improvised bed made up on the sofa in Hunt's

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

study. Hunt, although eleven years Keats's senior, had not outgrown a certain youthfulness of attitude. Woodhouse relates an innocent prank in which he and Keats were actors. Says Woodhouse:

> "As Keats and Leigh Hunt were taking their wine together after dinner, at the house of the latter, the whim seized them (probably at Hunt's instigation) to crown themselves with laurel after the fashion of the elder bards. While they were thus attired, two of Hunt's friends happened to call upon him. Just before their entrance Hunt removed the wreath from his own brow, and suggested to Keats that he might as well do the same. Keats, however, in his mad enthusiastic way, vowed that he would not take off his crown for any human being; and he accordingly wore it, without any explanation, as long as the visit lasted. He mentioned the circumstance afterwards to some of his friends, along with his sense of the folly (and, I believe, presumption) of his conduct. And he said he was determined to record it by an apologetic ode to Apollo on the occasion. He shortly after wrote this fragment."

The fragment is the *Hymn to Apollo.* The *Hymn* was written as a joke, but it has a magnificent movement, and the refrain "O Delphic Apollo" is really superb. It is a pity he did not build up another, serious poem to Apollo on this movement.

Two other poems, sonnets, owe their inception to the laurel prank: *On Receiving a Laurel Crown from Leigh Hunt* and *To the Ladies who Saw me Crowned.* It looks as though these sonnets were written as a competitive pastime with Hunt, for Hunt also wrote two sonnets commemorating the event. Hunt's opinion of the whole performance appears in the first lines of his second sonnet:

> "It is a lofty feeling, yet a kind,
> Thus to be topped with leaves."

Hunt, who, for some reason, missed laurel and got only

ivy, took the thing quite casually and turned out a couple of florid sonnets which he thought well enough of to publish later. Not so Keats; for all his apparent bombast, the play had an undercurrent of seriousness to him, but his sonnets are poor, particularly the last. The first is in a half-mocking vein, and Keats is so openly boyish in his desire to write a fine thing while he has the laurel crown on, and so evidently disappointed when the best thought he can muster is only a rehash of Hunt's political creed, that one cannot help smiling. He knew the sonnet was a failure and did not include it in the *Poems*, 1817, but he cared enough about the thing he had wanted to say in it to write it in Reynolds's copy of that volume. What shows that the sonnet was only half-heartedly humourous is that he took parts of it later for his *magnum opus* — as he felt it to be — *Endymion*. Later on, he was rather severe with himself upon the subject of the crowning, overdoing the severity, of course.

When the crowning came off is not known exactly, but it was probably some time during this Autumn or Winter. It is hardly possible that it could have happened before Keats went to Margate, he was so much less intimate with Hunt then, and so taken up with his examination. Professor de Sélincourt thinks that it took place in 1817, just before his visit to Oxford, but this is clearly not so, as Keats refers to it in a letter to George written in the Spring of that year.

Hunt loved nature in a degree only second to Keats. At this unfledged epoch of Keats's life, the two were rarely congenial. It was not long before Hunt dubbed his young friend with the inescapable sobriquet of "Junkets." The odd thing is that none of his other friends seem to have taken it up. Jolly good fellow as Keats was (he himself appears to have had no objection to this telescoped edition of his name; in one of his letters to Hunt, he signs himself "John Keats alias Junkets"), there was something about

him which precluded nicknames. "Junkets" simply would not stick. He was "Keats" to his friends, and, strangely enough, to Fanny Brawne also, just "Keats."

The most important consequence of Keats's frequent visits to the cottage in the Vale of Health was to bring him into contact with Hunt's friends. Haydon had spent some weeks in October at Hampstead, seeing much of Hunt,[1] and while there he must have heard a good deal of Hunt's new protégé. The result appears to have been an invitation to Clarke to bring Keats to his studio. Haydon says[2] that he met Keats at Leigh Hunt's, but Keats's letter to Clarke seems to prove that this was not the case.

Haydon was a very singular man. Born in Plymouth, the son of a bookseller, he had from his earliest years a perfect passion for drawing. Coming up to London when he was only nineteen, he worked with such indefatigable zeal, chiefly drawing from plaster casts, that he ruined his already impaired eyesight which never afterwards entirely recovered. His ambition was to become a great historical painter. With every aptitude of genius except its inspiration, he continued for years painting huge canvases which were too large to be comfortably housed in any private dwelling. In order to keep himself in paint, canvases, and models, he borrowed of everyone, rich and poor, always believing that success would come when the particular picture he had in hand was finished. His belief in himself was almost a mania, nothing could shake it. If he were not appreciated, it was because people were dolts, not because he was a bad painter. A group of enthusiastic and ignorant friends fanned the flame of his self-adulation. A few years of questionable notoriety was the fullest mead of recognition he was ever to know, and in the end, worn down by the hopeless fight and the load of debts which

[1] See Vol. I, p. 138.
[2] *Haydon's Biography and Journals*, edited by Tom Taylor.

there was no prospect of discharging, he cut his throat and shot himself at the age of sixty.

But if Haydon over-estimated himself as a painter, he was nevertheless a very extraordinary man. His fecund mind was constantly on the alert, devising schemes for the advancement of art. He longed to see the principal public buildings of England decorated with immense wall paintings of historic scenes, and proposed plan after plan to succeeding committees on the subject. Unfortunately, his manner towards his opponents was so violent that where he should have won friends he made enemies. It was impossible for him to see clearly in human relations. Haydon was an egotist of so extreme a type that he may be considered as practically a megalomaniac. A little real success would have been good for him, but his blindness to his own demerits made such a thing impossible. He fought with the Royal Academy, he fought even with his patrons. But he sacrificed himself unsparingly in the cause of art. His unending labours to make the British Nation purchase the Elgin Marbles have earned him his chief fame. For years, he button-holed painters, patrons, ministers, members of the House, committee-men, always to force them to listen to his views on the worth of the Marbles. He pamphleteered for them, he brought down upon himself obloquy and derision. He kept on; the Marbles were bought. It was a triumph, almost his only one.

This hectic, unbalanced, passionately devoted, passionately irreconcilable man was thirty years old and enjoying a simulacrum of success when Keats first encountered him. The Elgin Marble controversy had ended in a victory for Haydon, the Marbles being actually acquired by the Nation in 1816. His first picture, *Joseph and Mary resting on the Road to Egypt*, which was of moderate size, had been hung on the line at the Academy and sold at once; but his next two, *Dentatus* and *Macbeth*, had failed to create the interest he had expected for them. His third picture,

however, the *Judgement of Solomon* — a painting nearly thirteen feet long and over ten feet high — when it was exhibited in 1814 had really been acclaimed, and loudly. The directors of the British Gallery decided to buy it at Haydon's price, seven hundred guineas, but they were too late, the picture had been bought by a private person. Haydon was now engaged on a more pretentious subject than any he had yet undertaken, *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*. He was at work on this picture during the whole time that Keats knew him.

The *Jerusalem* is a very large picture. The centre of the canvas is occupied by the figure of Christ riding on a donkey, and all round, about, and behind him press a crowd of agitated spectators. Among them are one or two who can be recognized, for Haydon, following the custom of the early painters, did not scruple to introduce portraits of real people here and there. Voltaire is put in to represent skepticism, but this flight of fancy troubled Haydon not a little, he read Voltaire carefully to be sure of the justness of his idea of him, he prayed for guidance, and in the end Voltaire remained. But Haydon was too audacious to stop at Voltaire; he went on to add the heads of various of his friends, among them Wordsworth, whose portrait Hazlitt declared to be the best likeness of the lot. Haydon worked and worked over this picture. He painted his Christ in and out seven times, and left him in the end a failure. "Mr. Haydon," said Samuel Rogers, when the picture was finally finished and on exhibition, "your ass is the Saviour of your picture." A cruel, but painfully just, criticism. The faces of the crowd, however, are strikingly done. Various and curious, they cannot fail to attract attention. The *Entry into Jerusalem* took six years to paint. When it had been doing for a year, in 1815, Haydon was so elated with it and with himself that he described his feelings in a letter as follows: "Never have I had such irresistible and perpetual urgings of future greatness. I have been like a man with air-balloons under his armpits and ether in his soul."

Haydon took to Keats at once with all the florid ardour of his disposition. He says in his *Autobiography*:

> "About this time I met John Keats . . . and was amazingly interested by his prematurity of intellectual and poetical power.
>
> I read one or two of his sonnets and formed a very high idea of his genius. After a short time I liked him so much that a general invitation on my part followed, and we became extremely intimate. He visited my painting-room at all times and at all times was welcome."

This was written many years later, his contemporary expression is more vivacious. His journal for March, 1817, contains this note, written shortly after the appearance of Keats's *Poems*, 1817:

> "Keats has published his first poems and great things indeed they promise . . . Keats is a man after my own heart. He sympathizes with me, and comprehends me. We saw through each other at once, and I hope are friends forever. I only know that, if I sell my picture, Keats shall never want till another is done, that he may have leisure for his effusions; in short, he shall never want all his life while I live."

Fine words, Mr. Haydon, but how did you live up to them? Very badly indeed, as we shall discover.

Keats, constantly in the midst of a group of Haydon enthusiasts, was all prepared to find the painter a second Michael Angelo. On October thirty-first, he dispatches a note to Clarke, in which he says:

> "I will be as punctual as the Bee to the Clover. Very glad am I at the thought of seeing so soon this glorious Haydon and all his creation."

This looks very much as though Keats were anticipating an initial meeting, and in the painting-room, where Haydon will be surrounded by "all his creation." Haydon's

statement that he met Keats at Leigh Hunt's is undoubtedly the trick of a faulty memory. But Haydon's *Autobiography* can never be taken as gospel in its details; he jumbles events and places, telescopes one year into another, and generally confuses the issue. For general knowledge, it is admirable; for particular knowledge, it must be edited with some care and much reference to other sources of information.

Another sentence in this note to Clarke is arresting, for Keats continues:

> "I pray thee let me know when you go to Ollier's and where he resides — this I forgot to ask you."

What does this mean — Ollier's? The Olliers were the publishers of the *Poems*, 1817. Why, that a publication was in the wind, to be sure. I judge this by the fact that, although Keats asks where Ollier resides, he is clearly not referring to any specific engagement like a party. As he did not at the time know either of the Olliers, his going to see either of them was probably for business, not social, reasons. It had evidently been decided by Hunt and Company that Keats had enough poems for a volume; at any rate, that it would do no harm to consult a publisher. The brothers Ollier, Charles and James, were publishers of the lesser type, the kind who encourage youthful talent and gamble on its success. They had issued Shelley, and were personal friends of Leigh Hunt, at least one of them was, for they were sharply divided in their interests. James was the business member of the firm; Charles, who was musical and dabbled in verse, probably ran the literary end. That Keats asks Clarke where the Olliers live, must mean that he counts shortly upon going there. Of when he went, and what was said, no record remains. But we can imagine, in the light of future events, that a book was agreed upon, to be brought out for the Spring season, thus giving Keats an opportunity to add to his sheaf any poems written be-

tween the Autumn and the time the manuscript must go to press, which would probably be about January or February. As a matter of fact, nothing written after December appeared in the volume.

Probably it was the *Chapman's Homer* sonnet which fired the train leading to publication. Hunt's delight in Keats's work, and particularly in that sonnet, was being constantly justified by the attitude of the various friends to whom he read the poems. He speaks of one occasion when

> [1] "having the pleasure of entertaining at dinner Mr. Godwin, Mr. Hazlitt, and Mr. Basil Montague, I showed them the verses of my young friend, and they were pronounced as extraordinary as I thought them. One of them was that noble sonnet on first reading Chapman's *Homer*, which terminates with so energetic a calmness, and which completely announced the new poet taking possession."

We must thank Hunt for the excellent expression, "so energetic a calmness"; it is perfect.

These joyful days! — gay with hope, and crowded with new acquaintances! Another intimate of the Hunt circle, another fledging swan of the Hunt brood, was John Hamilton Reynolds. Reynolds was a most attractive young man, a year younger than Keats, but already the author of three books of poetry. He was the only son, and fourth child, of the head writing master, who was also mathematical master, of Christ's Hospital. The family, as Keats knew it, consisted of the father and mother, two sisters — older, respectively, by two and three years than their brother — and a younger sister. Marianne and Jane, the older sisters, became great friends of Keats's for a time. The elder, Marianne, afterwards married a Mr. Green; the younger, Jane, became the wife of Thomas Hood. Charlotte, the third sister, was a girl of fourteen when Keats was intro-

[1] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt.

duced to the family. Her piano playing at a little later date was a source of much enjoyment to Keats. There was still another member of this interesting family, Eliza, the oldest of all, but she had married a Mr. Longmore of Chelmsford, Essex, before Keats's advent into the family circle. He met her, on one occasion at least, when he wrote the sonnet *On Spenser* at her request, at her father's house, where she was probably making a brief visit; circumstances, however, caused her to remain merely a casual acquaintance, a little known member of a family with whom he was intimate.

John Hamilton Reynolds was born at Shrewsbury on September ninth, 1796. Part of his boyhood was spent at Sidmouth, but on his father's receiving the appointment to Christ's Hospital the family moved to London and occupied one of the houses reserved for the masters of that school, No. 19 Lamb's Conduit Street, Bloomsbury. They were a gay and intelligent group, these Reynoldses, with a lively interest in literature and a taste for the society of literary people; Mrs. Reynolds is said to have been quite equal to taking her part in the talk at Charles Lamb's evening parties.[1] The elder Reynolds was a bluff and hearty personage, if we can judge by a sketch of him made by his son-in-law, Thomas Hood,[2] but there is no mention of him in Keats's letters, whereas allusions to Mrs. Reynolds abound.

John Hamilton Reynolds was educated at St. Paul's School. At the time when Keats met him, he was a clerk in the Amicable Insurance Company, but he, and everyone else, believed that his destiny was literature. Reynolds possessed a precocious talent, which, like the majority of such talents, withered in the promise. In 1814, when he was only eighteen, he had published two books: *Safie, an Eastern Tale*, an imitation of Byron, to whom it was de-

[1] Colvin. [2] *Literary By-Paths in Old England*, by Henry C. Shelley.

dicated; and a pamphlet entitled *An Ode*. Reynolds sent a copy of *Safie* to Byron. Byron replied at length, praising the poem and predicting a shining future for the poet. In 1816, Reynolds brought out another volume of verse, the *Naiad*. This new book he sent to Wordsworth, who answered with much politeness, tempering a very judicious criticism by his manner of expressing it. Reynolds's best known book, the *Garden of Florence*, did not come out until after Keats's death, in 1821, and then under the pseudonym of "John Hamilton." The interval between the *Naiad* and the *Garden of Florence* saw the appearance of a parody of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell*, a burlesque of pugilism, published anonymously under the title of *The Fancy: A Selection from the Poetical Remains of the late Peter Corcoran*, and a farce, *One, Two, Three, Four, Five; by Advertisement*. In 1818, Reynolds, it is supposed at the instigation of the young lady, a Miss Drew, to whom he was engaged, decided to become a solicitor, but he continued to write occasional pieces for the magazines and provided the comedian, Charles Matthews, with words for several of his monologues; he was, besides, joint author with his brother-in-law, Thomas Hood, of a little anonymous book, *Odes and Addresses to Great People*. In the end, however, he was successful in neither literature nor law, and at last retired, a disappointed man, to the Isle of Wight, where he held the post of assistant clerk of the County Court of Newport. At the end of his life, he took to drink, and gradually sank in the social scale. He died at Newport in 1852.

No one could have foreseen this sad and abortive career in the days when Keats and Reynolds met in 1816. Reynolds was brilliantly clever, so every one thought, full of fun, a captivating companion, just the type to attract Keats. Hunt and Haydon were wonders, but they were much older; Reynolds was another youngster. Nothing could be better. And Reynolds brought with him a friend,

James Rice, a young solicitor, who seems to have been an unusually fine fellow in every way. Rice does not appear to have done anything particular outside his law; he just *was*, and everybody who knew him drifted rapidly under the spell of his kindness and his combination of wit and wisdom. Keats relied much upon his judgment, "Rice would not make an immature resolve," is one of his remarks about his friend, and again he writes to George in 1819, that Rice is "the most sensible and even wise man I know. He has a few John Bull prejudices, but they improve him." Dilke speaks of Rice as "dear, generous noble James Rice — the best, and in his quaint way one of the wittiest and wisest men I ever knew"; and Reynolds, to whom Rice had given over his entire practice, and who had made ducks and drakes of it — Reynolds, even after that, wrote to Lord Houghton, "He was a quiet true wit — extremely well read — had great taste and sound judgment. For every quality that makes the sensible companion — the valuable Friend — the gentleman, and the Man — I have known no one to surpass him."

Yet Rice was no prig, as all this might lead one to think. He was not averse to getting a little tipsy on occasion, as in those days was a common enough thing, he liked to kiss a pretty girl when circumstances threw one in his way, he did not shy from reading tales of a singular breadth of humour. He was, in short, good for play, and pre-eminently good for earnest. Rice seems not to have been strong; he was always ailing, but coming "on his legs like a cat," Keats says.

Others of the Hunt circle whom Keats met in the Autumn or early Winter of 1816 were Shelley, Hazlitt, the brothers Horace and James Smith, authors of *Rejected Addresses*, and Charles Lamb, but with none of these men did he ever become really intimate. He did not like Shelley. Poor, iconoclastic, circumstance-baffled Shelley! In December, 1816, his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, com-

mitted suicide, and three months later Shelley was deprived of their children by order of Court. These were unfortunate months in which to meet him for the first time, undoubtedly; but really there was too little in common between Keats and Shelley for them ever to have found much pleasure in each other's society. Shelley took his three years seniority as sufficient excuse to advise Keats not to be in a hurry to publish. Considering how the Hunt circle were beginning to feel about Keats, this must have been an unexpected and bitter drop to swallow. Shelley, apart from his poetry, was, as Max Beerbohm so succinctly puts it, "a plain, unadulterated crank." Keats did not like Shelley's type of poetry, and he was farther from being a crank than from any other thing one can name. Keats had an excellent mind, the kind of mind which is well spread out, not the kind which is all squeezed together into one little spot in an otherwise empty cranium. Shelley's opinions on practical affairs were worth nothing; on politics, ethics, and social economics, he talked and acted like a fractious, unreasonable child. Keats, on the other hand, was a perfectly logical, straightforward, and unprejudiced thinker. His emotions might run away with him; his ideas, never. His genius was above and beyond his mind, yet it did not impoverish it, as does the unbalanced genius of poets of lower rank. Shelley's mind was sucked and dwindled by his poetical faculty; Keats's was nourished and energized by his. Read the letters of the two men. When Shelley is neither poet nor crank, he is a pleasant, well-informed gentleman, seeing the world agreeably and mentioning what he sees in quite the usual manner of the early nineteenth century traveller; Keats is Puck, Paracelsus, even Paul Pry, perhaps. He is here, there, everywhere, with his tentacular mind poking into everything. Haydon, who always saw obliquely, thinks that Keats disliked Shelley because of his rank. But after all, a baronetcy only recently created is not a dazzling rank.

Keats was something of a snob, as we have seen, and he loathed being patronized with all his heart, but I think it more probable that Shelley's advice induced the fear of patronage than that the fact of his father's being a baronet did. The long and the short of it is that they did not get on, and never could have, each being what he was. Seeing that Keats was firmly under the spell of Chaucer and the Elizabethans at just that time, how could he have been expected to relish the kind of poetry which Shelley wrote? Keats was very young, and youth is not eclectic. It is only age, which having gone through much retains a little of all, that can be tolerant.

Keats never became intimate with Hazlitt for quite other reasons. Age and opportunity were against it, and it is a fact that Hazlitt did not care much for Keats's poetry — Haydon complained that it was only after Keats's death that he was able to get Hazlitt to acknowledge his genius — but he liked the man, and he liked the man's mind, or he would not have given him the manuscript of one of his books to read before the book came out, as we shall see that he did later. In these early days, he simply counted out the poetry; yet how justly he came to regard it finally can be seen by his *Select British Poets*, published in 1824. Here he says of Keats: "He gave the greatest promise of genius of any poet of his day. He displayed extreme tenderness, beauty, originality and delicacy of fancy." Hazlitt's selections from Keats's poems consisted of several passages from *Endymion*, the whole of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Fancy*, *Robin Hood*, and an extract from *Hyperion*. This was the first reprint of any of Keats's poems, preceding the Galignani reprint by five years. The reason this reprint has been so entirely overlooked by biographers is probably because the book was suppressed almost as soon as issued, for copyright reasons, and the better known edition of the following year omitted all the poets subsequent to Cowper. When we

think of Keats and Hazlitt, we must remember that, after all, there were seventeen years between them. A pleasant, casual kind of acquaintance was all that their intercourse ever amounted to, in spite of Keats's warm admiration for Hazlitt's critical acumen.

Keats seems to have seen Charles Lamb only a few times, and there is no reason to suppose that he was ever at any of Lamb's famous evenings. Horace Smith appears to have asked him to dinner occasionally, and the two kept up a desultory intercourse while Keats remained in England. So it was with others of the Hunt group, pleasant acquaintances all of them, but Reynolds and Haydon were the only two with whom casual contact ripened into close friendship.

Keats's note of October thirty-first to Clarke gives the impression that Clarke is to take Keats to Haydon's and that the visit is by appointment. This idea is confirmed by another, hitherto unpublished, note to Clarke[1] which seems to announce the postponement of this very visit. The note reads:

> " To C.C.C. greeting
>
> Whereas I have received a Note from that worthy Gentleman Mr. Haydon, to the purport of his not being able to see us on this days Evening for that he hath an order for the Orchestra to see Timon ye Misantrophas, and begging us to excuse the same — it behooveth me to make this thing known to you for a manifest Reason.
>
> So I rest your Hermit — JOHN KEATS."

Why I believe this note, although undated, to refer to the visit already planned on October thirty-first, is the simple fact that Timon of Athens was on at Drury Lane for the ten days beginning on Monday, October twenty-eighth, and ending with the performance of Wednesday, November sixth. Clarke being concerned in the meeting in both

[1] Day Collection.

letters goes far toward proving my supposition. That the postponed visit came off soon after Haydon's evening at Drury Lane is probable. The mutual pleasure of the poet and painter on that occasion led almost at once to the most cordial of relationships which, in turn, warmed into a friendship productive of much stimulation on both sides.

The sonnet, *Addressed to Haydon*, is confused by Professor de Sélincourt with the second sonnet to Haydon. The two followed one immediately upon the other in the *Poems*, 1817, and the second is simply entitled *Addressed to the Same*. In Keats's letter to Haydon of November twentieth, he enclosed the second sonnet only, and that is the one to which Haydon replied on the same day suggesting that he send the poem to Wordsworth. The first sonnet is so general in character that it may well have been written before Keats had actually met Haydon, and he quite evidently did not send it to Haydon or that insatiable battener upon compliments would certainly have lost no time in acknowledging it, and have duly recorded the acknowledgement in his journal. Haydon's share in the Elgin Marbles controversy was known to everyone, and when Haydon won, and the Marbles were actually the possession of the British Nation, enthusiasm ran riot. Haydon's son, in his Memoir of his father,[1] describes the furor with which Haydon's pamphlet was greeted, and continues:

> "Nor did his own circle of private friends behave less absurdly. They appear to have written sonnets in turn. Leigh Hunt in the character of a 'bard' led the way. He 'approves and blesses.' Miss Mitford 'sheds tears.' Reynolds apostrophises him as the 'savior of art.' Somebody else sends him to heaven as a modern Raphael and Michael Angelo rolled into one. Another adds the qualities of Leonardo to his credit, and calls upon Europe to build

[1] *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table Talk.* With a Memoir by his son, Frederick Wordsworth Haydon.

him a palace and endow him with riches. Wordsworth and Keats were the only two who kept their judgment and wrote something sensible."

There is no record of Keats's having written anything at the time of the pamphlet's appearance, and it seems quite evident from Keats's reply to Haydon's letter about sending the second sonnet to Wordsworth that Haydon had received but one. Keats enclosed only one, and in his answer he speaks of "it" not "them." Under these circumstances, I cannot help thinking that the first Haydon sonnet, which is clearly addressed to Haydon as the champion of the Marbles, precedes the second, and that, in the interval between the two, Keats paid his first visit to Haydon's painting-room. The second sonnet as clearly refers to both an impression and a conversation, indeed Keats says as much in the accompanying letter. "Last evening wrought me up," so Keats expresses himself. If the first sonnet had been written after he had seen "this glorious Haydon and all his creation," would the creation have figured as nothing, and Haydon himself merely as the unselfish devotee of "the cause of steadfast genius"? The difference in feeling between the two sonnets is another proof. There is a cool aloofness about the first sonnet, Keats was not the man to glow at the vision of abstract virtue, he needed the personal touch to spark him into flame. There is little choice between the sonnets as sonnets; there is a world of difference between them in feeling. They are neither of them among his best work in the sonnet form, but the second holds us by its evident fire, the first leaves us cold.

Keats had removed to Cheapside before November twentieth, but how immediately before is not known. That he was already there on the eighteenth is certain, for his sonnet, *To my Brothers*, is obviously written when they are all together. It is in Keats's most satisfying vein. The

whole tone of it is Keats — Keats, one of the most affectionate and domestic men who ever lived. Here he is at home. This is a quiet, comfortable evening with the brothers, who, after all, are nearer to him than any of his fine new friends. In Tom Keats's copy-book, the sonnet is headed *Written to his brother Tom on his Birthday*, and dated "Nov. 18, 1816." Tom was seventeen. There is so much of stress and turmoil in Keats's life that it is not only pleasant to see him at peace, it is absolutely necessary to give us a perspective and to make us realize how bitter the stress and turmoil were. With such an abiding love of home, such a craving for a home, as Keats had, the fact that he lost all semblance of one so soon takes on a great significance. The loss cannot be rightly gauged as a factor in his life until we understand this quality of his nature.

Because Keats can describe the scene far better than I, and because the scene is so important, I will quote the sonnet, well known though it is:

"TO MY BROTHERS.

Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals,
And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep
Like whispers of the household gods that keep
A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles,
Your eyes are fix'd, as in poetic sleep,
Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
That aye at fall of night our care condoles.
This is your birth-day Tom, and I rejoice
That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.
Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise
May we together pass, and calmly try
What are the world's true joys, — ere the great voice,
From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly."

We, who know the future in store for these boys, who know how few "such eves" there were to be, cannot help

feeling the deep pathos underlying the peace. And for them, too, it was here; for Keats rejoices that Tom's birthday is passing smoothly and quietly. An odd boon to be thankful for on a youngster's seventeenth birthday. Nothing could show better the storm and rack which these Keats boys had gone through — blow after blow, change upon change, loneliness, instability of circumstance, they were used to these, so used that a momentary lull was cause for gratitude.

How modern and realistic are the first two lines! Keats puts "cracklings," not "crackling," observe. This sonnet is somewhat reminiscent of Wordsworth's series of sonnets entitled *Personal Talk*. Wordsworth's "flapping flame" multiplies into many "Small, busy flames" whose "faint cracklings" are "like whispers." The word "voluble" is found in the third sonnet of Wordsworth's series, in which he also refers to the reading of books. Many years later, Hunt pilfered from Keats's lines:

> ". . . the household gods that keep
> A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls"

for his *Rainy Night:*

> "Stormy love's abroad and keeps
> Hopeful coil for gentle sleeps."

*To my Brothers* is a curious mixture of Hunt, Wordsworth, and pure Keats.

But moods change, and Keats was of moods compact. Authentic and deeply personal as was the mood of *To my Brothers*, Keats had other moods, many of them, quite as authentic and personal. On Monday, Keats is happy just to be at home with his brothers; on Tuesday, he is off and away to Haydon's to sit and gaze at all the paraphernalia of art in the making and talk his head off. It was the gayest kind of excitement and delight. These were heroic paintings: huge, virile sketches of heads, studies of mus-

cles straining up from taut arms, charcoal drawings of torsos done from the Elgin Marbles, rough smudges of attitudes and expressions. The room was full of memoranda flung about in every direction, and on the great easel glowered the half-finished picture of the *Entry into Jerusalem*, with the crowd in every state of completion, but the Christ, it is more than probable, a mere blank, undergoing one of its periodical washings-out. In the midst of this creative confusion, seeming to Keats like a god who has but to wave his arm to bring forth multitudes, was Haydon, Haydon flaming back to Keats's fire of admiration, burning from Keats's spark, wakened to an even more impulsive ardour than usual by the presence of an evident disciple. For, in these early days, Keats was very much that to Haydon. He swallowed Haydon's theories, he listened to Haydon's ideas, he talked to Haydon's talk, and Haydon was wise enough to know that here was a young man whom it was well worth while to ignite.

This was certainly a night, a night to produce effects. Quite a different sort of night from that spent with Chapman's *Homer*, but none the less one of those occasions which rank as experiences. Keats went home in a furor of energy and purpose, and wrote the second sonnet to Haydon. The note which contained it, despatched on Wednesday, the twentieth, is short and very much to the point:

> My dear Sir —
>
> Last evening wrought me up, and I cannot forbear sending you the following. [Here he copies the sonnet.]
>
> Yours unfeignedly
>
> John Keats."

Haydon is still "My dear Sir," but things are moving. In view of how far they moved, we may consider this sonnet as more momentous than itself.

Haydon records the receipt of the sonnet in his *Autobiography* as follows:

"One evening (19th November, 1816) after a most eager interchange of thoughts I received from Keats the sonnet beginning, 'Great spirits now on earth are sojourning.'"

Haydon answered Keats at once, and in his answer suggested sending the sonnet to Wordsworth. This proposition amazed and astounded Keats. His reply of Thursday afternoon declares that Haydon's letter has filled him "with a proud pleasure." He adds the significant sentence: "I begin to fix my eye upon one horizon." But Wordsworth — Wordsworth! This is Keats's reaction to Haydon's proposal: "The Idea of your sending it to Wordsworth put me out of breath -- you know with what Reverence I would send my Well-wishes to him."

Haydon, unlike most painters, was a reader and a genuine lover of poetry. He was, besides, a fair critic. In his letter, he suggested a daring alteration in one of the lines of the sonnet, the thirteenth, which originally read:

"Of mighty workings in some distant Mart?"

Haydon had the temerity to urge Keats to drop the second part of the line and leave it short:

"Of mighty workings?"

Keats was too good a critic himself not to see at once how great an improvement this was. His answer is emphatic: "My feelings entirely fall in with yours in regard to the Ellipsis, and I glory in it." The change was made at once and for all time. The copy of the sonnet which Haydon pasted into his journal has the thirteenth line truncated, and so it was printed in the *Poems*, 1817.

The "great spirits" of Keats's sonnet appear a little quaint to us to-day. Wordsworth, of course, but Hunt and Haydon! Lord Houghton reminds us that, in 1816, Wordsworth's position was far from secure and that it was "something for so young a man to have torn away the veil of

prejudice then hanging over that now-honoured name." Odd, indeed, are the inscrutable laws which govern changes of taste! Wordsworth is the only one of Keats's three supermen whose name does not seem out of place. But even in Keats's day, opinions differed. Woodhouse remarks of Hunt's inclusion in the sonnet, "He is introduced here to much better company than his merits entitle him to keep." Now, one hundred years later, Hunt is far better known than Haydon. Hunt is still read, but no one cares a fig for Haydon's pictures.

When Keats, descending from his "great spirits," referred to the still nameless men who constituted the hope of the future in the lines:

> "And other spirits there are standing apart
> Upon the forehead of the age to come"

he ran foul of the critics, who chose to consider such a statement as "a piece of personal conceit."[1] An evidence of quiet confidence in his own generation, these lines certainly were; but of conceit, no. Keats's metaphor here is reminiscent of *Lycidas:*

> "Flames in the forehead of the morning sky,"

and of *Troilus and Cressida:*

> "So rich advantage of a promised glory
> As smiles upon the forehead of this action."

In spite of the precedents for "forehead," it is not happily placed here. One cannot help seeing a phylactery of geniuses standing upon an immense forehead in the manner of a frieze to a Greek vase. The expression immediately brings in a grotesque element which is out of key and far from the author's intention.

In Haydon's *Autobiography*, he refers to his letter acknowledging Keats's sonnet by saying simply, "I thanked

[1] *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt.

him." But really he did much more than that — he ran round to Reynolds and showed him the sonnet. And he must have done this on the very next evening after he had received it, for Reynolds's reaction was prompt. His letter is dated: "Lamb's Cond^t Street Friday morning 10 o'Clock," so we know everything except the important facts of month and year, but the context so evidently supplies these that we can very well do without them, particularly as November twenty-second, 1816, was a Friday. Here is the letter:

"My dear Haydon,

As you are now getting 'golden opinions from all sorts of men,' it was not fitting that One who is sincerely your Friend should be found wanting. Last night when you left me — I went to my bed — And the Sonnet on the other side absolutely started into my mind. I send it to you, because I really *feel* your Genius, and because I know that things of this kind are the dearest rewards of Genius. It is not equal to anything you have yet had, in power, I know; — but it is sincere, and that is a recommendation. Will you, at my desire, send a copy to Mr Keats, and say to him, how much I was pleased with his.

Yours affectionately,
J. H. Reynolds."

Reynolds's sonnet we need not consider; it is both fulsome and feeble. The letter is important as showing that Reynolds and Haydon were already intimate, but that Keats was still a comparative stranger to both of them. With Haydon, a step had been taken; with Reynolds, the step was to come. Keats must have thought better of Reynolds's sonnet than we can possibly do, for it seems to have been the entering wedge to their friendship, although this could not have been long delayed in any case. Keats's social life was getting into its stride, if I may so put it. The little mutual admiration society which constituted Keats's world at this period was running on oiled wheels. Nothing

was lost, everything was gained. To the delightful meetings at Hunt's cottage in the Vale of Health, Hampstead, were added the equally delightful meetings in Haydon's painting-room in Great Marlborough Street. The talk at both places was endless, and in both places, also, there were pictures, casts, books of engravings, a host of interests to stimulate Keats's thinking faculties, at the same time that the perpetual discussions of technique roused and coloured his poetic dreams. The surface Keats was living on air; the profounder heart of the man was being watered, fecundated, rowelled up, stamped down, offered a hundred changing contours to the face of life. His friends were witnesses of the airy walk; only his brothers knew of the ferment in his soul. Wherever he went, he was welcomed; and indeed he was a most companionable fellow during the Winter of 1816–17. He was happy, that is the salient fact. His happiness, and the reasons for it, are all to be found in his sonnet *Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there* which describes a night walk when he is coming home from Hunt's. The realistic and perfectly modern description in the first three lines is notable:

> "Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there
> Among the bushes half leafless, and dry;
> The stars look very cold about the sky."

The coldness of Winter stars seems to have made a great impression on Keats. We have this effect again in a line in *What the Thrush Said*, written in 1818:

> "... the black elm tops 'mongst the freezing stars."

*Keen, fitful gusts* is an excellent sonnet, and completely in the new manner which I have often spoken of, and this makes it almost impossible to believe that it preceded *On Leaving some Friends at an Early Hour*. Yet Clarke says positively that it did. But Clarke's memory sometimes played him false in the matter of dates, and this last sonnet

is so strained and jejune, so overladen with weak ornament, so smothered beneath clap-trap prettinesses, that I should unhesitatingly place it as written in the Spring, at the time when Keats first met Hunt, were it not for some unfortunate passages in *Sleep and Poetry* which we know to have been written during the Autumn. I am scarcely convinced, yet without more evidence I feel obliged to retain Clarke's chronology.

The matter of the sonnet is as bad as its diction. The poet craves a golden pen, with which, while lying on "heap'd up flowers," he may write on a tablet whiter than a star or the hand of a "hymning angel" seen through the strings of a "heavenly harp." A pearly car is to glide by, in which he espies a glorious confusion of pink robes, wavy hair, flashing diamonds, and keen glances. While this is going on, music is to "wander round his ears," at "each delicious ending" of which he is to write down "a line of glorious tone, and full of many wonders of the spheres." At this point, he exclaims!

> "For what a height my spirit is contending!"

For what a height! For what a depth. This boarding-school-miss kind of nonsense is not to be tolerated. It is a pity that some one was not there to say, "My dear fellow, tear that stuff up at once. It is rubbish." But his friends liked it apparently, for he printed it.

On Sunday, December first, there appeared in the *Examiner* a little article entitled, *Young Poets*. The article was in the nature of an editorial, for, though unsigned, it conveyed the impression of carrying the weight of the paper behind it. Hunt, of course, was its author. The article began with Hunt's favourite thesis, the rise of a new school of poetry. Harping on this everlasting theme in the manner of the preface to *Rimini*, Hunt proclaims:

> "... there has been a new school of poetry rising of late, which promises to extinguish the French one that has

> prevailed among us since the time of Charles 2nd. It began with something excessive, like most revolutions, but this gradually wore away; and an evident aspiration after real nature and original fancy remained, which called to mind the finer times of the English Muse. In fact it is wrong to call it a new school, and still more so to represent it as one of innovation, its only object being to restore the same love of Nature, and of *thinking* instead of *talking*, which formerly rendered us real poets, and not merely versifying wits, and bead-rollers of couplets."

Having set his stage, Hunt proceeds to introduce his actors:

> "The object of the present article is merely to notice three young writers, who appear to us to promise a considerable addition of strength to the new school."

These three poets are Shelley, Reynolds, and Keats. Hunt calls Shelley "a striking and original thinker," and excuses himself for not quoting any of Shelley's poems by confessing that he has mislaid some which were sent to him. He speaks of an intention to read Shelley's published books soon, from which we must suppose that he knew Shelley's work very little at this date. Reynolds is praised and blamed in about equal measure, and a passage of twenty-seven lines from the newly published *Naiad* is quoted. Keats, for whom is reserved the honour of being the climax of the article, is dealt with as follows:

> "The last of these young aspirants whom we have met with . . . is, we believe, the youngest of them all, and just of age. His name is JOHN KEATS. He has not yet published anything except in a newspaper, but a set of his manuscripts was handed us the other day, and fairly surprised us with the truth of their ambition, and ardent grappling with Nature. In the following Sonnet there is but one incorrect rhyme, which might be easily altered, but which shall serve in the mean time as a peace-offering to the rhyming critics. The rest of the composition, with

> the exception of a little vagueness in calling the regions of poetry 'the realms of gold,' we do not hesitate to call excellent, especially the last six lines. The word *swims* is complete; and the whole conclusion is equally powerful and quiet."

At this point, Hunt quotes *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, which, with half a dozen lines of peroration, concludes the paper.

Hunt's wisdom in choosing just that sonnet to quote, cannot be sufficiently extolled, and his criticism of the poem is both apt and just. The false rhyme is, of course, "demesne" and "mean," which proves that up to December first, six weeks after he had written the poem, Keats had not fallen in with Cary's "pure serene." By the time his book went to press, however, which cannot have been later than early in February, the line had been altered to its present form.

Things were going well for Keats, but the effect of all this boosting was to make him itch to do something a little bigger. Haydon's colossal figures and colossal talk were producing an effect, and, on the whole, it was not a bad effect. Haydon was a believer in huge canvases, and, as opposed to Hunt, was like one of his own pictures placed side by side with a Spode tea-pot. Keats vacillated manfully between the two. Then there was the Wordsworth influence, remote and shadowy, but fruitful in the suggestion that poetry should be more than a beautiful surface. Chaotic as Keats's mind was in its effort to digest so many diverse new impressions, he yet felt the need of saying something at first hand, of slipping some definite idea beneath a superstructure.

How long he pondered this, there is no possible way of knowing; but the desire was not new to him when, some time during the Autumn, he passed a sleepless night with his surging confusions on the sofa in Hunt's study. This was a congenial place enough in which to have them assail

him. The room was lined with low bookcases on which stood busts, and the walls were crowded with pictures. Hunt says that this study was no bigger than "an old mansion's closet," and we can imagine the kind of literary and artistic jumble it was. These pictures, and books, and busts, merely carried on the talk of the evening. The silence must have buzzed with suggestion to Keats's excited ears. Atmospheres must have flowed into, and superseded, one another with the swiftness of kaleidoscopic patterns, as his mind lighted upon one object or another of the many by which he was surrounded. Above him were the effigies of the great masters, whose voices pealed and thundered from the shelves. These men had known how to leap the breach of death, and Keats longed with all his soul to capture this one overwhelmingly important secret — how not to die. He would spend himself to the pith to rise from the ruck of perishing men through the agency of an imperishable work of which he was the author. Poetry! Poetry! That was at once his sword and the world it should conquer. But how still the room was, how breathlessly quiet and concentrated! How softly the night wrapped itself about him, how possible darkness made his wildest dreams! Then the other men, all those writing hosts that had preceded him, those who had done well, those who had done ill — he speculated upon them in the teeming blackness. So the night went, wide-eyed and exhausting; but the impression remained and out of it grew *Sleep and Poetry*.

When *Sleep and Poetry* was written, we do not know exactly. But probably not earlier than November, 1816. The poem, as printed in the *Poems*, 1817, was headed with a most appropriate motto from Chaucer's *The Floure and the Lefe*. If Cowden Clarke's recollection be right, Keats's first introduction to Chaucer was when he read the *Floure and the Lefe* at Clarke's in February, 1817. But, as Keats's book was already entirely printed by the second of March,

when he wrote his *Dedication* sonnet which is dated on that day, it must certainly have been in press a month or so earlier. To insert a motto of five lines in a book after it was set up, would mean changing all the succeeding pages, an annoyance which few publishers would be willing to undergo for a young author with his first book. It is possible that the call at Clarke's may have occurred very early in February, and that the book may have taken less than a month to print, but this is pushing possibilities rather far. My own opinion is that Keats had read Chaucer before the day at Clarke's, and that the *Floure and the Lefe* sonnet was not an extempore piece of work, as Clarke thought. But of that later. The point here is that, although the motto may have been given to the poem after it was finished, *Sleep and Poetry* is long and must have taken a good while to write. Keats always took a long time with long poems; we have seen him taking several months to finish *I Stood Tip-toe*. I think, therefore, that in assigning *Sleep and Poetry* to November and December we shall not be far wrong.

*Sleep and Poetry* is certainly Keats's most ambitious attempt up to that time. Because it is in some ways a poem he set himself to write, it lacks the exuberant beauty, the flash, of *I Stood Tip-toe*. The poem begins with an invocation to sleep. The first line is charming:

> "What is more gentle than a wind in summer?"

but the next line spoils everything:

> "What is more soothing than the pretty hummer"

even the next two explanatory lines:

> "That stays one moment in an open flower,
> And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower?"

do not help it. These inequalities in the technique of Keats's early poems are very interesting, showing, as they

do, the disabilities under which he laboured. In this case, he was floored by the rhyme. No man ever worked harder to bring his technique into line with his thought than did Keats; a study of his first drafts is a liberal education in the art of writing poetry, as it is also an illuminating pointer to the psychology of the creative mind.

Some of Keats's similes on sleep in this invocation are very happy:

> "What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing
> In a green island."

He goes on to "the leafiness of dales," and "a nest of nightingales," then he suddenly catches sight of an engraving of Cordelia, or, if it is too dark to see it, recollects it, and promptly adds:

> "More serene than Cordelia's countenance?"

No one has yet traced the source of Keats's interest in an ash-tree full of berries, but somewhere, somehow, in fact or literature, Keats had met such an ash-tree and he could not forget it. I think he read of it, for he connects it with mountains, and at that time he had never seen a mountain. In *Calidore*, he speaks of plumes waving

> "High as the berries of a wild ash tree,"

here he has

> "Fresher than berries of a mountain tree."

This line stands at the opening of a new stanza, for now, across his thoughts of sleep, filtering through them, dominating them, come other thoughts, "awful, sweet, and holy." Sometimes they are "like fearful claps of thunder," sometimes

> ". . . like a gentle whispering
> Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing
> That breathes about us in the vacant air."

These are thoughts of poetry, that high thing to which he is aspiring. He likens it to the sun bursting through clouds, and says that any one who has seen this and has

> "... felt his bosom clean
> For his great Maker's presence, but must know
> What 'tis I mean."

This is a boy's utterance, a boy who is still content to be taught, to learn, whose individual opinions are no opinions at all, only feelings; who feels nature, but accepts philosophies, yet who is beginning dimly, ever so dimly, to formulate a creed, mostly at present of other men's designing, but still the stray beginnings of a creed.

Another invocation follows, and this time it is to poetry:

> "O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen
> That am not yet a glorious denizen
> Of thy wide heaven — Should I rather kneel
> Upon some mountain-top until I feel
> A glowing splendour round about me hung,
> And echo back the voice of thine own tongue?"

Unfortunately the "echoing back" was resorted to only too often. It was not until very near the end of his writing life, and not entirely even then, that Keats learnt to eschew the echo. In fact, with all his originality, he permitted himself echoes to an extent which might almost be termed plagiarizing.

"Stop and consider! life is but a day," he exclaims, in a line destined to live in familiar speech on account of its apposite quotability. Life is a dew-drop falling from a tree, the sleep of an Indian whose boat is rushing toward a cataract. (Here is Robertson's *America* again, for the cataract is the Fall of Montmorency.) But, after all, his youth asserts:

> "Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
> The reading of an ever-changing tale;

The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm."

The last three lines are the essence of careless happiness. Keats at this time was indeed a laughing school-boy, riding the springy branches of an elm, and in this case the elm was that life of stimulating friendships and intellectual excitement opening before him. It is his very soul which cries out

"O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed."

How young and immature he still was, is seen in his plea for ten years. Ten years is a monstrous long time when one is very young. And yet thirty-one is scarcely the period of completion in most men's lives. Viewing the expanse of life with a child's eyes, he thought it would suffice. Poor boy! He had only four years and a fraction, and to his own thinking the deed was never done; but what he did accomplish has been sufficient to put him "among the English poets" as long as the language lasts, one supposes. These lines are particularly important, for in them the poet expresses his determination of direction. We must note them carefully, for we never cease to hear the same cry while we have to do with Keats.

Keats's point of view was not formulated in prose. It was not in a condition to state, but still he was already vaguely conscious of it; he could circle round it in symbols, although he was utterly incapable of intellectualizing it, even to himself. We shall realize this more fully when we come to consider *Endymion*. A year and a half later, writing to Reynolds on May third, 1818, he has crystallized it into a statement. In this letter, Keats is discussing Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, and he may have had *Tintern Ab-*

*bey* in mind when he wrote *Sleep and Poetry*, for in it, he, like Wordsworth, sketches the differing phases of childhood, youth, and manhood. But how unlike is the attitude of the two poets. Wordsworth passes over his childhood without a trace of either interest or sentiment. He has lost all tenderness for the little fellow he once was, whose erstwhile joys appear to him merely as

> "The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
> And their glad animal movements."

That is all he has to say on the subject, his manner towards his childish self is avuncular and distant. Keats, on the other hand, looks very kindly at the boy he has so recently been. The springy branches of the elm are a recent and alluring memory.

The second state, youth, not only shows the difference in age of the two men at the time each wrote, but the difference in temperament. It is not a fair comparison, for Wordsworth is at his best in the passage in *Tintern Abbey* where he describes his youthful love of nature, and Keats is at his worst in the corresponding passage in *Sleep and Poetry*. Wordsworth looks back upon his youth with the sympathy he denies his boyhood, but still his description is in retrospect. It is, as he says, "what I then was." The description of natural objects in *I Stood Tip-toe* would be a juster counterpart to this passage of Wordsworth. The account of the period of youthful joys, of the pleasures of nature and imagination during it, in *Sleep and Poetry*, is among the most unfortunate things which Keats ever wrote. It is superficial, trivial, and forced; it is cheap and materialistic. It does not do justice to Keats's own temperament. He is thinking up a list of pretty pleasures of the Huntian type, but outdoing Hunt in silliness. In *I Stood Tip-toe*, Keats is recording what he really loves; in this passage in *Sleep and Poetry* he is writing verse for effect. Its poverty is evident in every line. It is exactly this passage which

makes me hesitate to put *On Leaving Some Friends at an Early Hour* back in the Spring. Any versifying folly is possible to a man who could perpetrate such miserable stuff as this, and insert it in a poem of avowedly serious intent. Keats did himself a great wrong in these lines, and the melancholy part of it is that undoubtedly his mentor, Hunt, and probably his other friends, praised him for them.

The comparison of Wordsworth and Keats in the last stage, manhood, can scarcely be properly made. Wordsworth was speaking of what he had experienced, Keats was guessing and his guess-work blew off in picture. Although the comparison is hardly just, it is interesting to set these two passages side by side, partly to make more evident what Wordsworth had and Keats had not, partly to prove Keats's growth in comprehension a year and a half later when he wrote to Reynolds. I shall quote the letter when we reach the period to which it belongs. Soberly, without exuberance, Wordsworth sets down the fundamental concept of his maturity:

> "... For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold

From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being."

Wordsworth's passage, fine and serious though it is, is marred by didacticism, a fault into which Keats never fell. Keats's manhood in this poem is mere vision:

"And can I ever bid these joys farewell?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts: for lo! I see afar,
O'ersailing the blue cragginess, a car
And steeds with streamy manes — the charioteer
Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear:
And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly
Along a huge cloud's ridge; and now with sprightly
Wheel downward come they into fresher skies,
Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes.
Still downward with capacious whirl they glide;
And now I see them on a green-hill's side
In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.
The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks
To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear
Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
Passing along before a dusky space
Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase
Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.
Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep:
Some with upholden hand and mouth severe;
Some with their faces muffled to the ear
Between their arms; some, clear in youthful bloom,
So glad and smilingly athwart the gloom;
Some looking back, and some with upward gaze;
Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
Flit onward — now a lovely wreath of girls
Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls;
And now broad wings. Most awfully intent

The driver of those steeds is forward bent,
And seems to listen: O that I might know
All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled — the car is fled
Into the light of heaven, and in their stead
A sense of real things comes doubly strong,
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness: but I will strive
Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
The thought of that same chariot, and the strange
Journey it went."

Was ever a more unsatisfactory statement of intention put into words? Keats realizes that to be a great poet he must find "the agonies, the strife of human hearts," but he has so little idea of how this is to be done that all he can think of is to conjure up a fairy-tale of a charioteer whirling over a world of mysterious visions, the most concrete of which is "a wreath of girls." That the figure is intended to mean a poet descending from the cloudy heights of imagination to mingle with humanity, needs no stressing. It is not the idea which is at fault, that is commonplace enough, in all conscience; it is the expression of it. Keats meant a great deal more than he had the power to think out. What he wanted to say was that descriptions were all very well, but he must learn to get nearer the poignance of life and infuse his poetry with it. Yet, even as he says this, or, at least, approaches to saying it, his fancy gets the better of him, and he swirls off in an aurora of patternless colour, committing the very blunder he swears to eschew. Curious psychological evidence of a bugbear — it is no more, no less. The interesting thing is that he knows it, and yet cannot escape — cannot, indeed, more than half want to escape — as yet.

Leaving the three ages of man, Keats turns to poetry, and the many talks he has had with Hunt and Hunt's

friends about the new movement. Keats's chief antipathy was, quite naturally, the poetry of the eighteenth century. Every age revolts against its immediate predecessor. The eighteenth century was over, the *Lyrical Ballads* had started a new era. It did not need Hunt to show him his direction; he inherited his bias by the mere fact of being born at the proper moment. Keats was all agog with the new movement; and, with the intolerance of youth, he hated the formal, unlyrical school of Pope. His new acquaintance with Chapman had shoved Pope still farther into the discard. With a charming arrogance, he declared of the group that

> "... with a puling infant's force
> They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
> And thought it Pegasus."

He shouted that "the winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd." He even caught up Wordsworth to help him and announced that

> "... The blue
> Bared its eternal bosom,"

so borrowing from Wordsworth's sonnet, *The world is too much with us*, the line:

> "The sea that bares her bosom to the moon."

"Beauty was awake," cried Keats to the shades of eighteenth century masters peacefully sleeping in the comfortable cerements of fame:

> "Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
> To things ye knew not of, — were closely wed
> To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
> And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
> Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
> Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
> Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
> A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask

Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it, — no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepit standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
The name of one Boileau!"

This is a splendid, ingenuous diatribe. A good wholesome blast of invective. The fact that Keats did not know what he was talking about when he called the sharp-edged, epigrammatic couplets of Pope, the carefully pruned, skilful, exquisite verses of Gray, easy, shows that he had never tried to write anything of the sort. Poetry has many mansions and one of them is verse; but probably the passing world, see-sawing back and forth from opinion to opinion as it moves on, records in ever increasing ratio its conviction that verse, however witty, satirical, and keen, is but an outhouse in the domain of poetry after all.

The poem rises out of the chaos of half-realized sensation in a perfect drum-rattle of protest and scorn. In this passage, Keats writes himself down a true modern and a man of his time.

From the Boileau passage, Keats goes on to picture the spirits of the older poets hovering round the scenes they knew, perhaps to give a welcome to the poets of whom he approves, who are, this time, Chatterton, Wordsworth, and Hunt, with a somewhat troubled reference to Byron at the end. There follows an idyllic vision of future poetry, in the midst of which Keats is suddenly seized with a most characteristic diffidence in regard to himself:

"Will not some say that I presumptuously
Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace
'Twere better far to hide my foolish face?
That whining boyhood should with reverence bow
Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach?"

But if he should hide, he exclaims, it would be in poetry.

No, he will not despair, for

> "... there ever rolls
> A vast idea before me, and I glean
> Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen
> The end and aim of Poesy ...
>
> . . . . .
>
> An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle
> Spreads awfully before me. How much toil!
> How many days! What desperate turmoil!
> Ere I can have explored its wildnesses.
> Ah, what a task! upon my bended knees,
> I could unsay those — no, impossible!
> Impossible!
> For sweet relief I'll dwell
> On humbler thoughts."

Keats's ambition knew no bounds, but, even as he cherished it, he began to fear its immensity. His mind during this Autumn and Winter is in a constant tumult over his great paradox. To do, and yet how possibly to do, that is his question. Again and again he must have turned from it in exhaustion. We see him doing this here. He begins to muse on his friends, particularly, we can imagine, on Hunt, in whose house he is, on the delight of their reading poetry together, on the pleasure of talking over books read before, and so he drifts into a fanciful description of the pictures hanging about him in the study. The poem ends by stating that

> "... The morning light
> Surprised me even from a sleepless night;
> And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay,
> Resolving to begin that very day
> These lines; and howsoever they be done
> I leave them as a father does his son."

Was ever so boyish and inconsequential an ending? Here we have it, a scrap-book of Keats's mind at the time, but scarcely a very successful poem. It does not compare

in beauty to *I Stood Tip-toe*. It cannot match the chiselled serenity and completeness of *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer*. It has few lines that stick in the memory, or that one wants to remember. Why, then, did not only his contemporaries, but those critics who succeeded them, even down to the present day, unite in declaring it the high-water mark of the 1817 volume? For the simple reason that it opened doors to a great many interesting thoughts and speculations. It is a grand failure, full of potentialities. Every one of the stages of Keats's career was marked by some splendid and fructifying failure. Having taken a step and laboriously brought his work up to the stage he had reached, he invariably took another step, and the new stage was again marked by a failure and various successes. He was too genuine a poet to be unwilling to dare; he was too brave a poet to remain within the limits of any achieved perfection; he was too honest a man to wrap himself in the cloak of an outdistanced knowledge. Four great failures punctuate his life, and they are among the most interesting things in it, from the psychological point of view. They are: *Sleep and Poetry*, *Endymion*, *Otho the Great*, and *Hyperion* — the poem so-called, I mean. For the *Vision*, that is a different matter; it teems with potentialities, and it is only the slightest of fragments.

There are three lines in the passage on the end and aim of poetry which I did not quote in their context for the reason that I wished to emphasize them particularly by themseves. They are:

> "... Therefore should I
> Be but the essence of deformity,
> A coward, did my very eye-lids wink
> At speaking out what I have dared to think."

We cannot enter fully into Keats's attitude when he wrote *Sleep and Poetry* unless we realize that the poem was intended as a sort of confession, and more than a confession,

a very signing of a poetical thirty-nine articles. He has worked himself up to the idea that it is encumbent on him to state his position. Regarding the creation of poetry as the most ideal activity to which a man can devote his life, he finds it a necessity that any one so dedicated should proclaim the fact, be the consequences of such proclamation what they may. Vague as his conceptions on the subject are, he must, nevertheless, say that he has them. No longer do we see the joyous excitement which imbues the poems done at Margate. At Margate, he was intoxicated with the idea of being actually a poet and nothing else; now the same thought is sobering. He has gazed long and ardently at his purpose, he has even fathomed something of the meaning of what he has undertaken. He knows vaguely, but with a reasonable speculation, how great will be his task. Tremulous, yet undaunted, he burns his ships, and in *Sleep and Poetry* we see the waving of the torch which ignites them. He has stated his case before the world, as he feels in bounden duty to do.

This was a challenge as it stood, but Keats had no idea how much of a challenge it was, and he flew directly in the face of destiny when he not only publicly signed himself poet, but left no doubt as to the kind of poet he was going to be. The early nineteenth century was not so tolerant to the utterances of youth as is the early twentieth. For one thing, the middle-aged to-day can scarcely point with pride to the results of the system into which they were born and which they are doing their best to continue. The cry of "Patience! Patience!" is not listened to gladly by boys who believe that they are the dupes of a want of prevision in their elders. It was very different in Keats's day. The powers that were could wave complacent hands toward the banners of Waterloo and Napoleon shut up at St. Helena. They could point out what they had done and command that it be thought good, and the majority were on their side. It was an age of

precedent, and precedent with deeds to back it. Poetry was breaking its chains and beginning to run with a mighty freedom, but the critics were not yet aware of an unsteady footing, or at least only so much aware of it as to stand firmer than ever. Keats threw in his lot with the new men; he could not possibly have done anything else, and it is quite characteristic of him that, instead of merely holding an opinion and acting on it, he must needs come out with it slapdash before everybody. It was foolish, of course, but a rather magnificent foolishness, after all. And he would have expected just what he got if he had been more experienced. It seems surprising that Hunt and Hunt's friends did not prepare him. I am afraid that they were too pleased with the annexation of so brilliant a young adherent to the movement to warn him as they should.

One curious thing about Keats's work is that, with all his infinite pains, he was often strangely careless. Many copyings by hand are probably partly responsible, and Keats seems to have been a wretched proof-reader, so we may put something down to those causes. The two short lines in *I Stood Tip-toe* are on purpose, of course, but equally of course the line in *Sleep and Poetry:*

"Or the low rumblings earth's regions under"

must be a mistake, unless Keats thought of "rumblings" as having three syllables, as he may have done, since he makes the same blunder in

"The dazzling sun-rise: two sisters sweet."

This very matter of pronunciation tripped him more than once. It overset him again in

"Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial limning"

when he certainly read the first word "p'raps." But I do not think

"Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach? How!"

is a mistake. I believe it to have been intentional, an effort to introduce a rest into a line for the effect of the pause before the exclamation "How!" Keats was more rhythmically daring than any poet of his time except Blake, and I believe this to be an instance of his attempting to impose a degree of variance into conventional prosody which that prosody will not, even to this day, contentedly bear.

Hunt and Haydon — these were the dual influences, as far as human contacts were concerned, which ruled Keats's intellectual life during this Autumn and Winter. Hunt appears to have replaced Cowden Clarke as mentor; Clarke, being himself largely derived from Hunt at this period, began imperceptibly to take a more equal place in Keats's estimation. For were not he and Clarke on a par where admiration of Hunt was concerned? Meanwhile the intercourse with Haydon was fast growing into intimacy. Keats was now not so much a visitor, as a frequenter, of Haydon's studio at 41 Great Marlborough Street. It was there, I am convinced, that a little incident of considerable importance to posterity must have occurred some time between the twentieth of November and the seventeenth of December. This incident is the making of the life mask.

It is not known for a fact that Haydon was the perpetrator of the mask, but that is the legend. And, in the cold light of reason, who else would have been likely to do it? Haydon was an adept at making plaster casts. He had obtained permission to take what casts he pleased of the Elgin Marbles, and had abundantly availed himself of the opportunity. In July, 1815, he had made a cast of his friend, the painter, David Wilkie's face. He records the affair with gusto:

> "Never had such fun, as Wilkie lay on the ground looking like a Knight Templar on a monument. We quizzed him till we roared. We gave him leave to laugh if he could;

all he could do was to clasp his hands to express his participation in the fun."

Keats was just the fellow for an artistic lark of this kind. He admired Haydon's taste, and if Haydon wanted a cast of his face, that in itself was a subtle flattery. On December seventeenth, he wrote to Clarke:

> "You may now look at Minerva's Ægis with impunity, seeing that my awful Visage did not turn you into a John Doree. You have accordingly a legitimate title to a Copy — I will use my interest to procure it for you."

It is not known whether Clarke ever did get a copy, but Reynolds certainly had one, which is quite natural, as Reynolds was more intimate with Haydon at this time than either Keats or Clarke. The Reynolds cast descended to his sister, Miss Charlotte Reynolds, by whom it was given to the National Portrait Gallery, London, in 1883. The legend which attributes the mask to Haydon also has it that it was made in 1816; so does our problematical evidence swing full circle. Buxton Forman says that Keats's sister, Señora Llanos, considered it "a more satisfactory representation of her brother than any of the portraits."

Keats was extremely industrious all through the month of December. He must have been overhauling his manuscripts preparatory to printing them. We know that he was still working on *I Stood Tip-toe*, and, as I have already shown, *Sleep and Poetry* must have been on the stocks, but, besides these activities, he found time to write five sonnets. Two of these seem to owe their existence to Hunt's surroundings and Hunt's conversation. For where should Keats have got his passing preoccupation with Italy if not at Hunt's? The sonnet, *Happy is England*, is simply the expression of a sort of nostalgia for the Italy of — what? *Rimini?* A little perhaps, but more likely of some romantic engraving in Hunt's parlour. It is not a

good sonnet, although the "tall woods" of England "with high romances blent" are pleasant. The sonnet is merely one of Keats's youthful flights of fancy, and his desire to float "about the summer waters" with "beauties of a deeper glance" than are common in England, relates it to the "wreath of girls" passage in *Sleep and Poetry*. At just this period, Keats was intermittently occupied with visions of vague and nameless damsels disporting among Utopian scenes. Punctually to certain moods, they reappeared, precisely as one might have recourse to a box of sugar-plums.

The second of these Hunt-begotten sonnets is that *To Kosciusko* which Hunt printed in the *Examiner* for February 16, 1817, where it is signed "J. K." and dated "Dec. 1816." The Polish patriot, who had not only fought for the integrity of his own country against a rapacious Russia in vain, but, after a voluntary banishment, had returned and headed another national movement against Russia and Prussia combined, who had been defeated, wounded, and thrust into prison, had also, in the beginning of his career, gone to America and joined the revolutionary army there. Such a man could not fail of becoming an idolized hero in the eyes of the Liberals of the period. It was surely talk of Kosciusko among the Hunt set which caused Keats to fall into his old patriotic stride and indite a sonnet to the man of the moment in Huntian discourse. Kosciusko's name is to stand with Alfred the Great's, but here he is not followed by any others of Keats's favourite heroes, his usual naming of them gives place to the comprehensive: "the great of yore." The poem is uninteresting, and, indeed, one begins to tire of Keats's dutiful echoes of Hunt's political opinions. The truth is that, at this early date, Keats had not begun to think of the subject at all. He took his politics ready-made from the group which attracted him for quite other reasons.

Exactly when George Keats's attachment to Georgiana

Wylie became a recognized engagement is nowhere recorded. But there is perhaps an inkling that the engagement was considered definitely as such by the end of 1816 in the fact that one of these December sonnets is openly addressed "To G. A. W." and written in Keats's own person and not as the mouth-piece of his brother. In the manuscript, the sonnet is entitled *To Miss Wylie*; in a transcript in Tom Keats's copy-book, it is called *Sonnet to a Lady*. Evidently a compromise between the obvious and the obscure was hit upon for the book. The initials told his friends what there was no longer any need to hide, and the public remained decorously in the dark.

As an evidence of Keats's love and admiration for Georgiana Wylie, the sonnet is most interesting; as a sonnet, it is one of the unfortunate things which date. Try as we will, to twentieth century ears its obsolescent diction hides the charm of its conception. The first line:

"Nymph of the downward smile, and sidelong glance,"

should be a delightful characterization, but it is spoilt by "Nymph." Time may bring this style of writing back to us, as time usually does in the long run; at the moment, it cannot be savoured. Yet the poem is a document of great value, not only because it reveals Keats's feeling for his future sister-in-law, but because, in spite of its florid technique, it proves what a singularly attractive person Miss Wylie was. That she was a very rare woman in many ways, there can be no doubt, but here we discover that she was also a very charming one.

On Sunday, December twenty-second, Keats wrote a sonnet which is so little known that I am going to quote it here:

"WRITTEN IN DISGUST OF VULGAR SUPERSTITION.

The church bells toll a melancholy round,
Calling the people to some other prayers,
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,

More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
Surely the mind of man is closely bound
In some black spell; seeing that each one tears
Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
And converse high of those with glory crown'd.
Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp, —
A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;
That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
Into oblivion; that fresh flowers will grow
And many glories of immortal stamp."

Tom Keats wrote in his copy-book, "Written by J. K. in fifteen minutes," which rapid writing shows how strongly he felt his invective. Tom dates the sonnet "Sunday evening, Dec. 24, 1816," but Christmas Eve in 1816 fell on a Tuesday, not on a Sunday, and it was evidently for the Sunday church-going that the bells were tolling, not for any Christmas festival. Tom could not have mistaken the day of the week, the subject of the sonnet proves that, but it is equally evident that he blundered over the day of the month, not an uncommon error with all three of the brothers, John himself is often very vague as to the date on which he is writing.

In this poem, we get at Keats in a surprising and effective way. He is beginning to think and probe for himself, to cast off the trammels of convention. It is true that he had been seeing Shelley, and had heard not a little of Shelley's atheistic talk; but Shelley's atheism was of the eighteenth century brand, as was Godwin's, and this kind of skepticism made no appeal whatever to Keats's type of mind. His own disbelief, when it came, was of a totally different sort. It reached him through no angry and spectacular revolt, but through the slow churning of thought within him. It made no difference to his actions as regards his life as a human being among human beings. His unbelief comforted itself with no rhodomontade, he never

paraded it, it simply settled upon him as an undeniable conviction, quite without the sphere of ethics. Ethical, Keats always was. Duty was his watchword; duty to his art, and to his personal relations. Keats could never have got into the sort of mess which Shelley fell into with Harriet Westbrook, and, having married her in a spurt of good feeling, have brutally deserted her. Shelley's whole spiritual nature was inimical to that of Keats. Realizing this, it seems extremely unlikely that either Shelley's braggadocio, or Hunt's gay impiousness, ever influenced Keats. There were parts of himself which he gave into no one's keeping.

It was no agnostic who wrote *Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition*, but a man who will not brook hypocrisy, and who dares see the false insistence of unhappy dogmatism.

The sonnet is good because it is straightforward and fraught with genuine feeling. The fact that it really ends in the middle of the penultimate line is, of course, a technical error; the rest of the line and the last line were tacked on because the form required it, and the result is anticlimax. "Lydian airs" is unfortunate; the diction of Milton's *L'Allegro* does not fit well with the forthright speech of this poem. "Converse high of those with glory crown'd" is Thomson's "hold high converse with the mighty dead" in *The Seasons*, *Winter*, but it is sufficiently disguised.

This was one of the home days, reading by the fire. In a note, from which I have already quoted,[1] in the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library, Woodhouse speaks of this sonnet as having been written "on the bells which disturbed him at his lodggs. at No. Cheapside." The incongruity of the gloomy bells, and all that they stood for, breaking in on his peace, that peace which meant so much in certain moods, roused Keats to a sudden hatred

[1] See Vol. I, p. 188.

of the grim ugliness they represented. A religion without beauty was a misnomer. It could not be; it was not. So far had he got and no farther — yet. This is a flicker in the wind which we must note at its relative value.

The sonnet is not a finished composition, but it conveys itself with swiftness and feeling, and the first four and a half lines of the sestet are really fine. Evidently Keats thought nothing of it, which is a proof of how hard it was for him to believe that a poem written in natural language could have merit. It may have been for this reason that Keats did not include it in his forthcoming book, more likely he thought, or some of his friends thought, that it would be considered a shocking performance. The manner of it can hardly have pleased the Hunt circle, and the vociferously religious Haydon, if he ever saw it, which I doubt, would have instantly begun a course of argument and prayer. So the poem vanished away, not to reappear for thirty-two years, when Lord Houghton printed it in his edition, from a copy probably, as he gives it the erroneous sub-title, *Written on a Summer Evening.*

Christmas came and passed; but with whom it was spent, we do not know. The stream of letters which gives us so many of the details of Keats's life does not become continuous until the following Spring.

We owe to Clarke the account of an evening spent at Hunt's very late in the year. It was, to be exact, on Monday, December the thirtieth, that Clarke and Keats went out to Hampstead. Clarke recounts that the talk having got upon crickets, "the cheerful little grasshopper of the fireside — Hunt proposed to Keats the challenge of writing then, there, and to time, a sonnet 'On the Grasshopper and Cricket.' No one was present but myself, and they accordingly set to . . . I cannot say how long the trial lasted. I was not proposed umpire: and had no stop-watch for the occasion. The time, however, was short for such a performance, and Keats won as to time."

Hunt was fond of these competitions, but his sonnet in this instance is execrable. We come at the two men so excellently in these poems that I will give them both. Hunt's sonnet shall precede:

"THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE CRICKET

Green little vaulter in the sunny grass
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When ev'n the bees lag at the summoning brass;
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both though small are strong
At your clear hearts; and both were sent on earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song, —
In doors and out, summer and winter, Mirth."

This is Keats's sonnet:

"ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE CRICKET

The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's — he takes the lead
In summer luxury, — he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills."

Hunt must have perceived how much better Keats's

sonnet was than his own, but the generosity of the man was sincere and unflinching. Clarke testifies to the "unaffected generosity and perfectly unpretentious encouragement" with which he greeted Keats's poem. Clarke mentions "his sincere look of pleasure at the first line," which he called "Such a prosperous opening!", and tells how, when he came to the lines about the frost, he exclaimed "Ah! That's perfect! Bravo Keats!" What Hunt does not seem to have noticed is the excellent pattern weaving of the poem: the sestet beginning with a variant replica of the first line of the octave; the careful keeping of the grasshopper in the octave; the condensed and yet ample characterization of the cricket; the return of the grasshopper in the last line, welding the two sections together and rounding out the conception with a satisfying completeness. This sonnet proves that Keats, careful reviser though he was, could on occasion improvise very well indeed. We have no first draft of the poem, so how much it differed from the printed version it is impossible to tell. Keats included this sonnet in *Poems*, 1817, and, in spite of the book's being, by that time, out, Hunt printed it in the *Examiner* on September twenty-first, 1817. It was so appropriate to the season that I suppose he could not resist it, particularly as he printed his own corresponding sonnet in the same number. There was also another reason, of which I shall have occasion to speak later.

The odd part of Clarke's tale is the end, where he remarks: "With all the gratifying things that were said to him, Keats protested to me, as we were afterwards walking home, that he preferred Hunt's treatment of the subject to his own." It would be interesting to know what Keats really said. Did he mean the conception of the subject or its execution? There is a great difference here. Keats's treatment is certainly far more original than Hunt's, but it is possible to like Hunt's approach to the subject; I do not think it possible to like Hunt's execution

of it. If Keats really did, then young, wondering friendship is blind, like love.

Keats's sonnet, although not up to his best, is a delightful thing. The opening is an excellent picture, vivid and suggestive; one can see it, feel it, and smell it. The frost, as Hunt pointed out, is perfect; and the return of the grasshopper in the end, as being recollected through the sound of the cricket, well managed. This end is not only beautiful as regards the technical pattern, as I have said, it is so in regard to what I may call the mental pattern as well.

Two more sonnets belong to 1816, but we have no more exact date for them than the year. One, *As from the darkling gloom*, may be dismissed with its mention. Keats rejected it for his forthcoming book, and he was perfectly right. The other, *Had I a man's fair form*, reads as though it belonged to the preceding Spring, since there appear in it a "knight," a "foeman," and a "cuirass." It is a love-poem, of no value as poetry, and only interesting because the first words, "Had I a man's fair form," seem to refer to a momentary and painful realization of his diminutive stature, which he conceives as a hindrance to any woman's loving him. This, and his mention of his size in the letter to Bailey I have already quoted,[1] make us aware that, in spite of the advantages of his appearance in other ways, his lack of height worried him a good deal at times. That George Keats stood quite five feet ten and was already a successful lover, is probably the clue to this first line. There is no hint to whom the sonnet was addressed. In Tom Keats's copy-book it is simply called, *Sonnet*. I believe it to have been merely one of those periodic gestures toward a vague and ideal eroticism which we have already observed occurring from time to time.

When Keats looked back on what had been accomplished during the year, I think he must have rubbed his eyes. He had got his apothecary's certificate, and imme-

[1] See Vol. I, p. 96.

diately after had let fall the aim of five hard-working years to take up another of most precarious possibility. True, fortunes were being made in poetry. The popularity of Byron, Moore, and Scott testified to this, but Keats could hardly have supposed that his kind of work would lead to any such golden future. Still, he had lined out his path and was stepping along it — that was a great wonder. A year ago, he had been a struggling medical student, knowing only a few obscure people; now, many of his friends were important men, men who were acknowledged masters in their kind, and he was taken in among them on equal terms, or, at least, on terms as equal as the difference between promise and achievement admits. But the most remarkable thing of all was that he had a book coming out. Dear me! What changes! And all to the good in his eyes, for not for one moment did he regret the loss of the sure subsistence which the practice of surgery would have brought him. The body of work that he had done, so much greater than ever before, justified his action. He must have felt sure of this, and regarded the future with considerable confidence. Probably he was happier just at this time than he was ever destined to be again. His woes, when he had them, were personal and artistic. For the nonce, the miseries of inevitable event were quiescent. The extent of Tom's illness was realized by nobody. There seemed to be plenty of money for all current needs. He sincerely liked the girl to whom George was engaged. When the church-bells tolled for the New Year, theirs can have been no sinister sound; hearing them, he must have felt a good deal like Dick Whittington resting by the milestone.

## CHAPTER IV

### A PET LAMB IN A SENTIMENTAL FARCE

The heading of this chapter is Keats's subsequent expression of the rôle he was playing at this period.[1] That he came to regard it so, is significant of his power of growth. Petted he certainly was, and to a degree which falls to the lot of few young men, even those who give promise of marked genius. He enjoyed it, of course, and it took him some time to get his bearings and wrench himself away, but it speaks volumes for his just apprehension of facts and his naturally affectionate disposition that even when he had learnt to see the triangle of his friends, his work, and himself in a truer relation, these same friends, in differing degrees, continued a part of his life. No longer a child in leading strings, he took them on another plane; but it was their fault, not his, when change, however subtly, altered the circumstances of their intercourse with him.

We shall see all this happening in due time. The sentimental farce was in full swing during the Winter of 1816–17. After all, although the sentimentality cannot be gainsaid, farce is perhaps too strong a word. It applies very well to Hunt, whose attitude toward life was chiefly one of pleasant buoyance — on very shallow grounds, indeed, but this a series of unnecessary and thriftless misfortunes were unable to make him aware of. In the case of Haydon, the farce takes on the dourness of satire. He was sincere enough, but like a man catching at phantoms in a game of blind-man's-buff. Unlike his friend, Wilkie, who knew what he could do and did it to the best of his ability, at the same time carefully eschewing what was beyond his power,

[1] See *Ode on Indolence*; also letter to Miss Jeffrey of June 9th, 1819.

Haydon persisted against all sense in believing himself a giant, and ended as the veriest pigmy of them all. John Hamilton Reynolds, less assured, and with reason, than Hunt and Haydon, takes his place in the farce more pathetically. We are not tempted to see satire in his failure so much as tragedy. As to Keats himself, the word farce applies only to the extent of his admiration for men so far his inferiors. What would have been the effect upon him had Haydon been Turner, Hunt been Coleridge, and Reynolds been Shelley? This brings in the question of whether genius is best fostered by genius. I think we can safely answer "no." Genius goes its own way, and is usually only hampered by too close an intercourse with other correspondingly great geniuses. Is there a case, except that of Goethe and Schiller, where one genius has been cordially and profitably intimate with another? I cannot think of one. At this stage in his career, Keats needed admiration and stimulus. The admiration could not be overdone for his good, provided the time allotted to it were short. The kind of stimulus which Hunt, Haydon, Reynolds, etc. gave him was just enough. He could assimilate it and pass on. There was no danger of its holding him; he was bound to outdistance it, and, when this was accomplished, follow his own trend unconfused by any rival issue. On the whole, he was considerably indebted to the farce, a fact which he never clearly understood.

Among other things which genius is, a genius is a man with the power of growing beyond other men in particular directions. For this reason, to a man of genius, friendships, events, atmospheres, must, to a great extent, be merely stepping-stones. The air he breathes at certain periods of his life is uncommonly likely to stifle him at others. Everything must be lived through with zest, and very nearly everything must be sloughed off in due course. We can see this process taking place in Keats's life, short though it was, with remarkable clarity. Already, by this

New Year of 1817, the sloughing had begun. Where were Keats's schoolmates? We know that he was popular at school, and there must have been fellows there whom he considered as friends, but not one of these appears to have followed him even so far as the Edmonton surgery. Henry Stephens and the medical students had gone, and even George Felton Mathew seems to have dropped away, for we hear nothing of him henceforward. Mathew may have married. He must have done so young, as thirty-odd years later, in 1848, he was the father of twelve children. In the case of these early friends, it is not necessary to probe into the whys and wherefores of their disappearance from the scene of Keats's life. For his later, more important, friendships, we shall see them arriving and departing, or, if not departing, remaining with altered psychological contours as far as their position in the scheme of Keats's life is concerned. And we shall see the same thing with regard to books, art, and life in general. With Keats, things moved swiftly, and when we consider that, starting from this January of 1817, four years completes the span of his life, we shall realize the incredible speed of his development.

Among the most salient events of this time was Keats's rapidly growing intimacy with John Hamilton Reynolds and the whole Reynolds family. The two friends were extremely congenial. Their tastes and aims were the same, and their characters fitted to a T. Marianne and Jane Reynolds quickly became almost like sisters to Keats. The fact that they were older than their brother brought them into just the right relation with his friend. Keats was not in the frame of mind to fall in love, except with theoretical nymphs in fairy grottoes, but he was very much in the frame of mind to appreciate older sisters. It is significant that a year and a half before, when he was seeing much of the Mathew family, both the Miss Mathews were much older than himself. I have already spoken of his need of

being mothered. With women older than himself, such a relation might be imperceptibly assumed. It was to the thinness of their natures that the Mathew girls owed their inability to mean more to Keats than they did. The better endowed Reynoldses gave what the Mathew ladies could not, and for some years they were very important to Keats.

In spite of the fact that George Keats was the younger of the two brothers, he was far more self-sustaining and mature than John. This is perfectly in keeping with nature's usual procedure. Since John was to develop much farther than George, he had, perforce, to go more slowly. George's nature was all that had to grow; in John's case, his genius had to grow as well. It was quite on the cards that George should fall in love with a girl younger than himself, and feel perfectly comfortable and capable in the position of accepted lover. John was neither able to bring about, nor did he desire, any such condition for himself. His unique demand of the women to whom he was attracted was that they should be as much as possible like sisters; unless they were going to be suitable to him in that capacity, they were quite useless. He made a delightful brother; as an admirer, his time had not yet come.

It is a pathetic thing that Keats never found just the woman he needed to act as mother, confidant, playmate, and wise and sympathetic counsellor, a woman fitted to see him through his difficulties and enthusiasms with unwearying sympathy, and hand him over to the inevitable girl who was sure to come, when the time arrived. Even Marianne and Jane Reynolds were not of a kind to do all this. His intercourse with them seems to have been affectionate, playful, and sincere, but not to have reached very far below the surface. Still they did quite well for the time, and Keats was very fond of them.

Considering how profoundly Keats admired his future sister-in-law, Georgiana Wylie, who was in his estimation

"a glorious human being," it may at first sight seem not a little strange that he could not find in her just what he needed. But a moment's reflection will show where the hitch came. In the first place, Georgiana Wylie was, at the moment, only fifteen; in the second, she was engaged to his brother. Now, however dear a sister may be, even a favourite brother is not the recipient of the best she has to give in the early days of her engagement. If Keats corresponded with Miss Wylie before her marriage, there is no evidence of it, while he did correspond with Marianne and Jane Reynolds. He grew to love Georgiana with the most devoted brotherly affection, but she belonged uniquely to George. There can be no doubt that, had she and George remained in England, John would have come to rely upon her more and more. Just at this time, she was too young, and too completely occupied with George.

We have seen what Keats looked like, and we have probed a good way into his heart and mind through the medium of his poems. We know how he appeared to Stephens and Matthew when he first arrived in London. But a year had passed, and the year had been full of action and growth. What manner of man did he seem to his new friends? What kind of impression did he make upon those who knew him in the flush of his early ambition, walking happily about the narrow world of his daily routine? Lord Houghton, whose opinion being based on the accounts of eye-witnesses may be taken as almost first-hand evidence, depicts him as follows:

> "... his society was much sought after, from the delightful combination of earnestness and pleasantry which distinguished his intercourse with all men. There was no effort about him to say fine things, but he did say them most effectively, and they gained considerably by his happy transition of manner. He joked well or ill, as it happened, and with a laugh which still echoes sweetly in many ears; but at the mention of oppression or wrong, or

at any calumny against those he loved, he rose into grave manliness at once, and seemed like a tall man. His habitual gentleness made his occasional looks of indignation almost terrible."

Cowden Clarke says much the same thing:

"I never knew one who so thoroughly combined the sweetness with the power of gentleness, and the irresistible sway of anger, as Keats. His indignation would have made the boldest grave; and they who had seen him under the influence of injustice and meanness of soul would not forget the expression of his features — 'the form of his visage was changed.'"

Bailey, who came into Keats's orbit a few months later, recording his impressions, which exactly tally with those of Clarke, writes:

[1] "I was delighted with the naturalness and simplicity of his character, and was at once drawn to him by his winning and indeed affectionate manner towards those with whom he was himself pleased . . . His brother George says of him that to his brothers his temper was uncertain; and he himself confirms this judgement of him in a beautiful passage in a letter to myself. But with his friends, a sweeter tempered man I never knew. Gentleness was indeed his proper characteristic, without one particle of dullness, or insipidity, or want of spirit. Quite the contrary . . . He was pleased with everything that occurred in the ordinary mode of life, and a cloud never passed over his face, except of indignation at the wrongs of others.

His conversation was very engaging. He had a sweet-toned voice, 'an excellent thing' in *man* as well as 'in woman . . .' He had a soul of noble integrity: and his common sense was a conspicuous part of his character. Indeed his character was in the best sense manly."

From this quotation from Bailey's memoranda, we see that George Keats was right in saying that John did not

[1] Colvin.

trouble his friends with his moods and vexations until after Tom's death and George's departure for America.

The charm of his conversation seems to have impressed everybody except Haydon. Writing in his journal after hearing of Keats's death, he has many things to say, among them:

> "In fireside conversation he was weak and inconsistent, but he was in his glory in the fields. The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun, seemed to make his nature tremble."

It is amusing to note what sides of Keats's character struck which of his friends. The painters, Severn and Haydon, are observant of his powers of perception, and the effect which natural objects made upon him; his literary friends remark upon his keen critical sense, his aptness of expression and beauty of phrase, his likes and dislikes in regard to books. No one sees him entire; it is only posterity, looking through many eyes, who can approach to that.

In this posthumous description of Keats, Haydon, who had wronged him and thereby lost the treasure of his complete esteem, is a trifle malicious, or, if not that by intention, at least he is inclined to exaggerate facts and misconstrue actions. Yet, in spite of this tendency, his account is both more complete and more illuminating than most of the others. That his praise was just and his understanding keen, is shown by his opening declaration in regard to Keats, which is that "a genius more purely poetical never existed!" Continuing from the part I have already quoted, here is Haydon's account, from which I have deleted a few redundancies and one or two grossly misrepresenting passages:

> "He was haughty, and had a fierce hatred of rank; but he had a kind gentle heart, and would have shared his fortune with any man who wanted it. His classical know-

ledge was inconsiderable, but he could feel the beauties of the classical writers. He had an exquisite sense of humour . . . He had no decision of character, and having no object upon which to direct his great powers, was at the mercy of every petty theory Hunt's ingenuity might start.

One day he was full of an epic poem; the next day epic poems were splendid impositions on the world. Never for two days did he know his own intentions.

He began life full of hopes, fiery, impetuous, and ungovernable, expecting the world to fall at once beneath his powers."

It is not difficult to separate the true from the false in Haydon's statement. The last sentence, indeed, is a far better characterization of Haydon himself than of Keats. Keats was extremely fiery, and his ambitions were as far-flung as ambitions can be, but he was no fool; on the contrary, he was a particularly modest and hard-working man. Impetuous, of course he was, but ungovernable principally in being determined to work out his own salvation. It is a big man who will let a disciple go his own way when he is ready to travel alone, and neither Haydon nor Hunt were of sufficient calibre to permit their neophyte to escape their clutches without recrimination. But Haydon, while misinterpreting the reasons completely, has hit upon something important when he says that Keats had "no object upon which to direct his great powers." I wish to go into this later, but not here. This is not the place to expatiate upon a fact which no one who has written upon Keats except Haydon seems to have realized. I shall return to this when we reach the time when Keats himself began to be aware of it. He was not aware of it in 1817, and neither was Haydon; indeed, as a fact, it had not then begun to exist.

Of course it is nonsense to say that Keats had no decision of character. Few men have had so much. Haydon mistook immaturity for indecision, that is all. We must

always remember that Haydon lacked the sense of shading. Things were, or they were not, to him. A poorer psychologist never lived, he could see only what was patent at a glance, to causes and motives he was deaf and blind. As to Keats's vacillating from one point of view to another on matters of detail, how could it be otherwise with a man so excited, delighted, confused, and exhausted with the furious onslaught of new impressions as Keats was at this period. Haydon and Hunt, both of whom he admired to an absurd degree, were each pulling him different ways, and he, poor boy, bounced between them with perfect good will, but with the obvious appearance of changing goals.

Both Hunt and Haydon speak of Keats's hatred of rank, so I suppose he must somehow have exhibited this quality. It does not appear in his letters, and we have merely their word for it. If Keats had this trait, it could have come out only in conversation, a poor guide where a very young man is concerned. Since he never, during his whole life, met any one possessed of any rank whatever save what native wits could supply, he can scarcely have shown his feeling by action. The republican Hunt, who rather loved a lord than otherwise when he chanced to encounter one, was probably largely responsible for any utterances on the subject which Keats may have made, and Haydon, who sought patronage and then failed to deserve it, doubtless roused Keats's indignation against those aristocratic connoisseurs of art by means of whom, and solely by means of whom, painters of that day could earn a living.

It has become somewhat the fashion of late years to decry Keats's sense of humour. How any one can read his letters and fail to perceive his inexhaustible sense of fun, it is beyond my powers of comprehension to conceive. Exquisite, as Haydon says, his humour was. It bubbled out of him in a sparkling effervescence. Perfectly natural, unsophisticated, prankish humour it is, running all the

way from the keenest wit to the sheerest kind of nonsense, the sort of nonsense which Edward Lear has made so famous. His wit is ever present, it even infuses those passages in his letters where it is without intention. It is high, and it is contagiously low; at times it descends to a rollicking verbal horse-play, and then again it is the slenderest thread of playfulness which we lose and follow and find again across the stuff of serious things. He can be a very clown upon occasion, or he can touch with the lightest hand some foible, some gesture, of a person carelessly met, but stamped in this way to a perpetual grotesqueness. Toward the end, his humour became shuttled with irony. The *Cap and Bells* proves what he might have done with satire had he lived. Here is a description of three bores, so brightly and inevitably sketched, so shrewdly differentiated, that it could in nowise be bettered. Comedy of a high order, indeed! He flings it off in a letter written to his sister-in-law in January, 1820:

> "I know three people of no wit at all, each distinct in his excellence — A, B, and C. A is the foolishest, B the sulkiest, C is a negative. A makes you yawn, B makes you hate, as for C you never see him at all though he were six feet high. — I bear the first, I forbear the second, I am not certain that the third is. The first is gruel, the second ditch-water, the third is spilt — he ought to be wiped up. A is inspired by Jack-o'-the-clock, B has been drilled by a Russian serjeant, C, they say, is not his mother's true child, but she bought him of the man who cries, Young lambs to sell."

For the benefit of a generation who have no recollection of even Punch and Judy, who used to parade the London streets of my youth, it may be well to state that toy lambs were carried round on trays, the cry of the vendor being "Young lambs to sell."

As to Keats's nonsense, that can wait until we come to the letters written to his little sister Fanny. His puns may,

I think, be left unrecorded. Punning was rife in the Keats circle; it was the fashion of the time. A notable thing about Keats is that, even when he indulges in a very bout of slapstick fun, he is not vulgar. There are only two instances throughout the whole of his correspondence which overstep the bounds of permissible joking, and this is not a little remarkable when we reflect that a pleasant hoax of the period was the passing round at a party of a dish of medicated bon-bons. It was the era of the practical joke and the unbridled tongue, when ladies were not present.

Keats was an extraordinarily many-sided man. One of his chief charms was his perfect freedom from affectation. It is safe to say that the greater the man, the more natural he is. Again Haydon sees Keats clearly when he says:

> "Keats was the only man I ever met with who seemed and looked conscious of a high calling, except Wordsworth. Byron and Shelley were always sophisticating about their verses: Keats sophisticated about nothing. He had made up his mind to do great things, and when he found that by his connection with the Examiner clique he had brought upon himself an overwhelming outcry of unjust aversion he shrunk up into himself; his diseased tendencies showed themselves, and he died a victim to mistakes on all hands, alike on the part of enemies and friends."

Once more Haydon is a perfect reporter and a poor interpreter. It is extremely important to have the testimony of one who knew Keats well to the fact that he never sophisticated about anything. If he gave the effect of being conscious of a high calling, we know from his letters that bumptiousness can have had no part in it. He was quietly sure, but without the least taint of cocksureness. For the last part of the passage I have quoted, it is sufficient to say that Haydon did not know of how many misfortunes Keats was a victim.

Haydon is responsible for an impression which was pre-

valent for some time. Namely, that Keats was inclined to periods of dissipation. Haydon even tells a story to prove Keats's super-sensuality in drinking. That this tale was bandied about and discussed at length, that it proved a real stumbling-block toward a true comprehension of his character, is one of the most amusing bits of evidence against the England of good Queen Victoria. Let me say emphatically, what no one now needs to be told, that Keats was not at any time in his life a drunkard. He drank, of course, everybody did; the idea of total abstinence had not then dawned upon the human race, with the exception of that part of it which professed Moslemism. Everybody drank, and most people drank too much. It meant nothing at all to be "a little so-soish," as the slang of Keats's day called getting tipsy. Keats went with his world, but within sensible limits. As Lord Houghton says: "A strictly regulated and abstinent life would have appeared to him pedantic and sentimental." None of the Keats set were drunkards, and he himself seems to have kept well on the margin of any form of dissipation. His taste was for claret, which alone proves how mild his alcoholic tendencies were. It takes a great deal of drinking to get drunk on claret, and there is no reason to suppose that Keats was in the habit of consuming enough bottles to reach that stage. In fact, as Lord Houghton points out, he speaks of having drunk too much on one occasion as a rare piece of joviality. His own description of claret is more poetical than convivial. Here it is, set forth in a letter to George of February, 1819:

> "I never drink now above three glasses of wine — and never any spirits and water. Though by the by, the other day Woodhouse took me to his coffee house and ordered a Bottle of Claret — now I like Claret, whenever I can have Claret I must drink it, — 'tis the only palate affair I am at all sensual in. Would it be a good spec. to send you some vine roots — could it be done? I'll inquire. If you could

> make some wine like Claret, to drink on Summer evenings in an arbour! For really 'tis so fine — it fills one's mouth with a gushing freshness — then goes down cool and feverless — then you do not feel it quarrelling with your liver — no, it is rather a Peacemaker, and lies as quiet as it did in the grape; then it is as fragrant as the Queen Bee, and the more etherial Part of it mounts into the brain, not assaulting the cerebral apartments like a bully in a bad-house looking for his trull and hurrying from door to door bouncing against the wainscot, but rather walks like Aladdin about his enchanted palace so gently that you do not feel his step. Other wines of a heavy and spirituous nature transform a man into a Silenus: this makes him a Hermes — and gives a Woman the soul and immortality of an Ariadne, for whom Bacchus always kept a good cellar of claret — and even of that he could never persuade her to take above two cups."

Does that sound like a confirmed wine-bibber? The idea is absurd. How little he knew of wine is proved by his suggestion that George try vine-growing in Louisville, Kentucky. Haydon's tale is that Keats "once covered his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with Cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the 'delicious coldness of claret in all its glory.'" Well, suppose he did, where is the harm? It was clearly done as a waggish experiment. But even if he had always drunk his claret so (which he did not, as the letter to George proves), what would it signify? Simply that his mucous membrane was as tough as a cowhide boot, which again it was not, or the letter to George would never have been written. Haydon was a gentleman of oblique vision, given to profuse statement. In this case, the false emphasis he has laid, and wilfully laid, upon a boyish prank, is something one finds it hard to forgive. "If you want to make a man your enemy, lend him money," that proverb is the cue to Haydon's attitude in these posthumous recollections.

One fact about Keats cannot be too strongly insisted

upon. This is the entire absence in his letters of any loose mention of women. We hear of wine-parties and card-parties, but there is no mention of any women being present at these entertainments. Keats writes everything to his brothers, he gives them a complete account of his doings. The slips in taste I have mentioned occur in letters to them. Yet not once do we hear of any equivocal adventure. What immoralities Keats perpetrated, if any, were evidently not a subject for mirth or comment. Manners were lax in the early nineteenth century. Every reader of the *Farington Diary* must be struck with the numbers of "natural" children of noblemen whose parentage was perfectly well known, but who enjoyed all the privileges of rank notwithstanding. Aristocratic damsels with a bar sinister were apparently quite as eligible for marriage as their more conventionally born sisters. Kept mistresses, if the connection lasted any time, enjoyed quite an enviable status, while cheaper and more transient immoralities were as popular as they always have been. The middle-classes were a good deal sounder morally than the peerage, but a young man could do pretty much as he pleased without animadversion. Evidently Keats pleased to live a decidedly clean and strenuous life. We may say, with something like certainty, that we know everything he did; for which reason, it is safe to assume that what we do not know of, he did not do. He had a good healthy liking for the broad speaking of sixteenth and seventeenth century writers, and was quite capable of relishing a lively, animal pleasantry, but the painful and cynical making of mud-pies which is the principal preoccupation of our modern novelists was as far from his attitude as it was from that of Congreve, for example.

It is curious to realize in this day and age that Keats and his friends took snuff. This habit, inherited from the eighteenth century, had not yet universally given place to smoking. Everybody snuffed, from the Prince Regent

down. Captain Gronow tells an amusing story of the famous surgeon, Astley Cooper, warning him against cigar smoking, to which he was addicted, declaring that it would shorten his life.[1] Keats several times mentions taking snuff; he never mentions smoking. Keats does not seem to have danced, although he occasionally went to dancing-parties. His chief indoor recreation undoubtedly was talking, but he also played cards, and speaks with glee of having won ten shillings and sixpence. It was a mild form of gambling, for his greatest loss appears to have amounted to no more than ten pounds, and this was a rare event. Vingt-et-un is mentioned, but what other games the Keats circle played can only be surmised from our knowledge of the card games then in fashion.

Among other amusements was what Keats calls "playing a concert." This consisted in everyone's impersonating some instrument and then setting to with its appropriate sound. This innocent pastime greatly irritates Sir Sidney Colvin. Why, I cannot conceive. Probably these young fellows produced the most horrible cacophony, but that need hardly tease the ears of any one a hundred years afterwards. Had these boys been music students, they might have made these concerts quite pleasant. They were not, but I cannot find the "playing a concert" so silly an affair as Sir Sidney would have it. At any rate, it kept them out of mischief.

Keats had a great love of the theatre, which was cheap enough, for, if out of funds, he could go to the shilling gallery. His taste seems to have led him to the classic and modern serious drama at Drury Lane. He did go to pantomimes, and what were called private theatres, but never seems to have cared much for either. His musical knowledge was slight, although he enjoyed listening to the piano, but on the whole he preferred painting and sculpture to music. He positively haunted picture galleries,

[1] *The Reminiscences and Recollections of Captain Gronow*, 1810–1860.

yet, in spite of Haydon and Severn, he never seems to have acquired much technical insight into either art.

There was one type of amusement which was very prevalent in Keats's day. This was boxing. Keats, as an old boxer, liked to see a "mill" now and again. In 1820, Reynolds wrote a poem entitled *The Fancy*, under the pseudonym of "Peter Corcoran." This has given rise to the idea that Reynolds was a constant frequenter of sparring matches. Perhaps he was, certainly Woodhouse enjoyed them. In a preface to a recent reprint of *The Fancy*, John Masefield has described a typical evening at a sporting establishment so pleasantly that I cannot do better than insert it here. It represents a scene with which Keats was familiar. Masefield is speaking of Reynolds, exaggerating the frequency of his attendance at such places, I think, but that is no matter:

> "Night after night, when the London lamps were lit, he was to be seen sauntering down to the Five's Courts, or to Jack Randall's in Chancery Lane, to meet the bloods and the sports and to watch some sparring. There, in the great shed-like building, in an atmosphere of cigar-smoke, heavy-wet, and deady, he would jest with the leading pugilists, or with the great Pierce Egan, or with Captain Barclay, the leading amateur, who had trained Tom Cribb for his fight with Molyneux. Every now and again they would pause to watch the sparring; for in both resorts there was a ring on a raised stage where the game sports stripped and sparred. Reynolds and his set were not mere on-lookers, content to watch while the mufflers padded on the flesh. They were fond of the sport for its own sake; and often put on the gloves and had a rattling good rally with really good boxers, such as the Davises or Randall himself."

The Fives Court was the great place for rackets, the precurser of our modern tennis, but Keats did not, apparently, play, although we know that on one occasion he met Hazlitt going there for a game and went along with him part of the way.

Sparring matches and prize-fights are all very well, but it is a little disconcerting to modern taste to find Keats going to a bear-baiting. Yet he did. Clarke describes the impression left on him, which seems to have been principally a matter of drama with no particular awareness of cruelty attached to it. It is the dramatic sense in Keats which Clarke emphasizes:

> "He once described to me his having gone to see a bear-baiting, . . . his concurrent personification of the baiting, with his position — his legs and arms bent and shortened till he looked like Bruin on his hind legs, dabbing his fore paws hither and thither, as the dogs snapped at him, and now and then acting the gasp of one that had been suddenly caught and hugged — his own capacious mouth adding force to the personation, was a remarkable and as memorable a display."

Clarke however adds these pregnant words to his account:

> "The partaking in such exhibitions did not for one moment blunt the gentler emotions of his heart, or vulgarize his inborn love of all that was beautiful and true. He would never have been a 'slang gent,' because he had other and better accomplishments to make him conspicuous . . . Had he been born in squalor he would have emerged a gentleman."

Perhaps Keats's sensibility increased as he grew older, perhaps the sporting element in the bear-baiting obscured to him its horrible cruelty, for some time later he had a stand-up fight with a person whom Clarke calls "a butcher boy," George Keats, "a fellow in livery," and Keats himself, simply "a brute," who was tormenting a kitten. Keats battered his antagonist to good purpose, although he was much the lighter and slighter of the two, and bore away the victory and a black eye.

The gist of all these quotations is that Keats was a very human sort of man, and a perfectly healthy and virile one.

If he did not play rackets or cricket, he did take immensely long walks, and probably kept his hand in with a little boxing. One side of his character relieved another, and all together kept him mentally and physically alert. I think nothing describes him so well, at this period, as the slang term "a regular fellow." We must not forget that the friends with whom he went to boxing-matches, and bear-baitings, and sat up playing cards till day-spring, were none of them idle, brainless fellows; all were working hard at something, and not a few of them were artists. Reynolds, and his brothers, were probably his companions at the sporting events, for we can scarcely imagine Hunt and Haydon being partakers in them.

Haydon has left us one little glimpse of Keats which rounds out a whole story: "I have enjoyed Shakespeare with John Keats," he says, "more than with any other human creature."

All this time, there is no mention of ill health. And certainly Keats must have been extremely robust to have stood the wear and tear of the previous Winter, torn between his medical studies and poetry. Mathew especially states that "he enjoyed good health," and during the Winter of 1817 this same good health seems to have been universally taken for granted, for no one mentions it. One little circumstance, however, should not be overlooked. Leigh Hunt records [1] that Keats would look at his hand, "which was faded, and swollen in the veins, and say it was the hand of a man of fifty." But as Hunt gives no date to this proceeding, it may refer to a subsequent period.

To all these pen-portraits, I wish to add one of another kind that is particularly charming. In Tom Keats's notebook [2] — which seems to have been a sort of catch-all, used indiscriminately by both John and Tom for any random jotting, from drafts of poems and letters to lists of one

[1] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt.
[2] Day Collection.

kind and another and even rough sketches — appears a drawing. This drawing is evidently intended for John. Who is responsible for it, we do not know, but that it represents John Keats reading one of his favourite big books is evident from the attitude of the figure. At the end of his paper on Keats,[1] Clarke says:

> "There is one of his attitudes during familiar conversation which at times (with the whole earnest manner and sweet expression of the man) ever presents itself to me as though I had seen him only last week . . . The attitude I speak of was that of cherishing one leg over the knee of the other, smoothing the instep with the palm of his hand."

Somebody, perhaps Tom, perhaps Severn, has caught Keats as he sat reading in this most characteristic position, and thereby given us a glimpse of him as he appeared constantly to all his friends. Through the courtesy of Mr. F. Holland Day, who owns the original, I am enabled to reproduce this drawing for the first time.

Knowing Keats as well as we must by this time, it is not difficult to imagine his daily life during the early months of 1817, although we have no letters from him between December and March. Haydon tells of a dinner party where were present the Hunts, the Shelleys, Miss Kent (Hunt's sister-in-law), Hill, Haydon, Horace Smith, and Keats. At this dinner, Shelley attacked Haydon on the subject of Christianity; Haydon vociferously defended himself and Christianity together, feeling, he says, "like a stag at bay"; Hunt egged on first one disputant and then another, always inclining to Shelley's point of view; and Keats remained outside the discussion entirely. Buxton Forman says that Haydon's son told him that this dinner took place in January, but we know that the Shelleys were in London during the first weeks of February and were much at Hunt's. Mary Shelley's diary speaks of Keats drop-

[1] *Recollections of Writers*, by Charles Cowden Clarke.

ping in two or three times. On one of his visits, Reynolds was with him, so that Hunt's three "young poets" were actually together in the same room at least once. Shelley did not take to Reynolds, and as Keats and Reynolds were already on terms of the closest and most sympathetic friendship this circumstance probably added its quota to Keats's indifference to Shelley, while Haydon's cordial dislike of him after the quarrelsome dinner may possibly have also had its influence upon Keats.

During January, Keats was undoubtedly busy with the final revision of his poems for publication. By February, the book had gone to press and proofs were being corrected. Revising is an arduous task and so is proof-reading, and Keats had these excuses for writing nothing, or practically nothing, for one sonnet written on January thirty-first is his sum total of poetry for that month. This is perfectly natural. The creative faculty works by bursts, unless it be engaged in bringing some considerable conception into existence. Keats needed a creative rest. He had been composing at a great rate for months; it was a necessity for him to lie fallow.

The January sonnet, *After dark vapours*, refers to the sudden appearance of a warm day in the midst of Winter, with the thoughts which such a day engenders. It is one of the Huntian group of poems, and rather curious in that the atmosphere, in Keats's imagination, seems to take on the "feel," not only of May, as Keats has it, but of Summer and Autumn as well, the whole cycle of the year's fruitfulness in short. This makes the sonnet seem more of a literary poem than a poem spontaneously sprung from the experience of a change in the weather. The last line:

"A woodland rivulet,—a Poet's death"

bears out the theory. Hunt printed this sonnet in the *Examiner* on February twenty-third.

Some time in February, in all likelihood during the last

two weeks of that month, the sheets of Keats's book were ready for binding. Clarke recounts how one evening, when he and various other friends were at Keats's lodgings, the last proof-sheet was brought in, with the intimation that, if there were to be a dedication, the printers must have it at once. Keats "withdrew to a side-table," relates Clarke, "and in the buzz of a mixed conversation . . . he composed and brought to Charles Ollier, the publisher, the Dedication Sonnet to Leigh Hunt." Clarke is convinced that this sonnet was conceived then and there, but this I very much doubt. It is hardly likely that Keats had not pondered over the question of a dedication. Hunt had been very kind to him, printing his poems in the *Examiner*, smoothing the path to publication, encouraging him in every way; in common courtesy, if the volume were to be dedicated to any one, it must be to Leigh Hunt. I cannot say exactly why, but the poem reads to me too trippingly to have been hurried off with the printer's devil waiting at the door. It may have been written down then, in all the hubbub, but certainly it gives the impression of being well considered and carefully planned. Clarke is fairly possessed with his idea of Keats as a rapid writer, but we have little proof of this. The *Grasshopper and the Cricket* sonnet was certainly done at speed, but, as I have pointed out, we have no knowledge of the first draft.

Whether the *Dedication* sonnet were written at the moment, or copied from a slip of paper in Keats's pocket, or set down as an end to considerable previous cogitation, it is a good sonnet. I have said that Keats was more or less obliged to dedicate the sonnet to Leigh Hunt. That is true, but he evidently felt no reluctance in so doing. Far from it, the whole tone of the sonnet is sincere and threaded through with abiding admiration. Whatever Haydon may have felt on the subject, it is quite clear that Hunt's star is still in the zenith. The last five lines are perfect Hunt and Keats mixed:

"And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time, when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,
And leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like thee."

Hunt was, not unnaturally, delighted with this tribute, which he acknowledged in an answering sonnet. This, however, does not seem to have been written immediately, or at least it cannot have been communicated to Keats for some time, for, in the copy of the *Poems*, 1817, given by John to his Brother George,[1] George has carefully copied on the half-title both of Hunt's "crowning" sonnets, heading them "Sonnet on Receiving a Crown of Ivy from my brother John. By Leigh Hunt," but there is no sign of this new sonnet.

Hunt's reply sonnet is as follows:

"TO JOHN KEATS.

'Tis well you think me truly one of those,
Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things;
For surely as I feel the bird that sings
Behind the leaves, or dawn as up it grows,
Or the rich bee rejoicing as he goes,
Or the glad issue of emerging springs,
Or overhead the glide of a dove's wings,
Or turf, or trees, or, midst of all, repose.
And surely as I feel things lovelier still,
The human look, and the harmonious form
Containing woman, and the smile in ill,
And such a heart as Charles's, wise and warm, —
As surely as all this, I see, ev'n now,
Young Keats, a flowering laurel on your brow."

The gist of this sonnet proves that Leigh Hunt, for all his silliness, had a great deal of insight and knew genius when he saw it. So far, so good; but, in spite of its insight, Hunt's sonnet is a cloying thing. Here is the sentimental farce

[1] Author's Collection.

rampant, and Keats, the pet lamb, led along with a garland of roses. No wonder that Keats, when his eyes were once fairly open, turned away from this sort of thing in disgust. Compliments paid in such a tone of voice fail of their object. They are tasteless and disillusioning. The pet lamb had to turn, or be a pet lamb to the end of his days.

Hunt put this reply sonnet into his book, *Foliage*, published a year later, in 1818. But, by that time, Keats's change of heart was complete. In the copy of *Foliage* which Hunt gave him,[1] he has not deigned to make a single annotation or score a solitary line. He gave the book later to Fanny Brawne, but the gift seems to have been a casual one, for the pages remain unmarked and there is no fresh inscription.

The period of Hunt's supremacy in Keats's eyes was nearing its term, but as yet not even Keats was aware of any such approaching alteration of his views. It is for this reason that I put the sonnet, *On the Story of Rimini*, as belonging to this time. Lord Houghton dates the poem "1817," but that alone would not seem conclusive, as Keats's friends may quite possibly have been in error in giving Lord Houghton that date, for, on the face of it, we should expect the sonnet to have been written during Keats's preoccupation with Hunt's book the year before. There is, however, stronger evidence for giving 1817 as the year of its composition. This is the internal evidence of the poem itself. The style of it is that of 1817, not 1816. There is no getting away from this cogent fact. What brought Keats back to *Rimini*, we do not know, but that he was brought back is evident. A little later, and Keats is off the Hunt track altogether, as far as his interests go at least, so the poem must have been written early in the year. I attribute it to February because, before the first ten days of March had gone by, Keats had seen the Elgin

[1] Author's Collection.

Marbles and started off in a new direction. Early in 1817 *Rimini* is still "that sweet tale"; by May of the same year he is "not in humour" with either Hunt's poetry or his own.

The *Rimini* sonnet, while by no means great, is quite a pleasant little thing. The mention of the moon:

"Or Moon, if that her hunting be begun"

is a pointer to his already crystallizing project of writing a poem on the story of Endymion.

Keats's next poem, also a sonnet, we know to have been written in February. Sir Sidney Colvin dates it February twenty-seventh, but he gives no authority for this, and I cannot find it in any of the records to which I have had access. This is not to say that February twenty-seventh is an incorrect date, but merely that I have been unable to verify it. It is quite clear from the sonnet's not appearing in the *Poems*, 1817, that it was written too late to be incorporated in that volume. But I am doubtful of Sir Sidney's date for the simple reason that Reynolds's *Sonnet — To Keats. On Reading his Sonnet Written in Chaucer* is dated by Woodhouse on that very day.

Clarke tells a pretty tale of the circumstance, as he believes it, which induced the composition of *Written at the end of "The Floure and the Lefe."* I may as well give it in his words:

> "Another example of his promptly suggestive imagination, and uncommon facility in giving it utterance, occurred one day upon returning home and finding me asleep on the sofa, with a volume of Chaucer open at 'The Flower and the Leaf.' After expressing to me his admiration of the poem, which he had been reading, he gave me the fine testimony of that opinion in pointing to the sonnet he had written at the close of it, which was an extempore effusion, and without the alteration of a single word. It lies before me now, signed 'J. K. Feb., 1817.' If my mem-

> ory do not betray me, this charming out-door fancy scene was Keats's first introduction to Chaucer."

Clarke is writing many years after the event, and there are several reasons for thinking that his supposition that this was Keats's first introduction to Chaucer is a mistake. In the first place, there is the motto of *Sleep and Poetry*, taken from this very poem of Chaucer's. Of that, I have already spoken.[1] Then there is Keats's statement that he had been reading the poem. Clarke, in recollection, refers this to an immediate reading, but it is quite as likely to have been a general statement, meaning that he had been reading the poem lately. This was probably so, at any rate, for there is the motto; moreover, Sir Sidney Colvin points out that a dream within a waking sleep is both Keats's and Chaucer's *mise en scène*. The parallel between *Sleep and Poetry* and *The Floure and the Lefe* ends here, of course; but, as far as it goes, it exists. A third, very cogent reason, has been exploited by Buxton Forman, who, in a pertinent note as to the extemporaneousness of the sonnet, says:

> "As Clarke seems to have been asleep when it was written, we are justified in construing the word *extempore* with a certain latitude. It was certainly most unusual for Keats to write a sonnet without a single erasure; and it is likely that he jotted this one down in pencil in a note-book that he certainly carried at that time and did draft sonnets in. In any case he probably had ample time and quiet, while Clarke was sleeping, to elaborate the two highly finished quatrains in his mind; the third quatrain and the couplet are of inferior merit, and might well be extempore."

Buxton Forman is quite right in saying that the first eight lines of the poem are the best; he is also right as to the unlikelihood of Keats's writing a poem "without the alteration of a single word." What was there to prevent

[1] See Vol. I, p. 215.

Keats from copying an already composed sonnet into Clarke's volume of Chaucer while Clarke was asleep? He did just this with the *Bright Star* sonnet in a copy of Shakespeare's *Poems* which he had recently given to Severn, when the two were on their voyage to Italy in 1820.

The chief inference of this examination is that Keats already knew Chaucer's *The Floure and the Lefe* before the day of Clarke's call; but there is also a by-product here which is of importance. If Sir Sidney Colvin's date for Keats's sonnet be correct, then, in all probability, Reynolds had seen it before Clarke did, in which case the sonnet in Clarke's Chaucer is a copy and not a first draft; if, on the other hand, Clarke is right as to the sonnet's having been composed on the day of his call at Keats's lodging, then Sir Sidney's date must, it would seem, be incorrect. It would be quick work for Keats to run to Reynolds and show him his sonnet, and for Reynolds to reply with another, all on the same day, and less than half a day at that. On the whole, I am inclined to believe the first of these alternatives, particularly as Keats signed Clarke's copy with no date but the year. If the sonnet had been composed on the spot, does it not seem likely that Keats would have put down the day of the month as well? If he had forgotten it, as he often did, Clarke was there to prompt him.

The octave of Keats's sonnet is a beautiful thing. The sestet falls badly. But, autobiographically, the line

"I that forever feel athirst for glory"

is interesting, once more proving Keats's consuming ambition at this time. The last couplet with its rhyme of "sobbings" and "robins" really ruins the poem. Keats's authority for this was probably his own false pronunciation. Did the middle classes of those days habitually drop their "g's," as did the "swells" of the 'eighties? Probably also Keats leant on Wordsworth for justification, for in Words-

worth's *The Redbreast and the Butterfly*, in his *Poems* of 1807, are these lines:

> "Art thou the Bird whom Man loves best,
> The pious Bird with scarlet breast,
> Our little English Robin;
> The Bird that comes about our doors
> When Autumn winds are sobbing?"

Keats's new sonnet was enthusiastically received by the little circle of his friends. Hunt printed it almost immediately, in the *Examiner* of March sixteenth. He prefaced it with characteristic enthusiasm:

> "The following exquisite sonnet . . . is from the pen of the young poet (Keats) . . . who may already lay true claim to that title: —
>
> '. . . the youngest he
> That sits in shadow of Apollo's tree.'"

Reynolds rushed into verse, and the sonnet he wrote is among his best things. I print it here, partly to show what Reynolds's verse was like, partly as evidence of the quality of his feeling for Keats and his generosity in regard to him:

[1] "SONNET — TO KEATS.

ON READING HIS SONNET WRITTEN IN CHAUCER.

Thy thoughts, dear Keats, are like fresh-gathered leaves,
Or white flowers pluck'd from some sweet lily bed;
They set the heart a-breathing, and they shed
The glow of meadows, mornings, and spring eves,
Over the excited soul. Thy genius weaves
Songs that shall make the age be nature-led,
And win that coronal for thy young head
Which Time's strange hand of freshness ne'er bereaves.
Go on! and keep thee to thine own green way,
Singing in that same key which Chaucer sung; —

[1] Woodhouse Commonplace Book, in the possession of Sir Sidney Colvin. Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

Be thou companion of the Summer day,
Roaming the fields and olden woods among: —
So shall thy Muse be ever in her May;
And thy luxuriant Spirit ever young."

Reynolds's sestet is not a bad criticism of Keats. It is amusing to observe that the last line of the octave is a sort of back-hand echo of the penultimate line of Keats's sonnet *How many bards:*

"That distance of recognizance bereaves."

Reynolds, in his triple rhyme in this octave, employs exactly the same words, with one exception, that Keats had used in the sestet of that sonnet.

Reynolds wrote his sonnet on a Thursday, and he probably read it or sent it to Keats on Friday or Saturday. Is the note which Keats wrote to him and dated simply "Sunday Evening," an answer to it? Yes, and no. Part of the note seems to refer to the sonnet, part to be an answer to something which Reynolds had either said or written about his forthcoming book. Keats writes:

> "Your kindness affects me so sensibly that I can merely put down a few mono-sentences — your criticism only makes me extremely anxious that I should not deceive you. Its the finest thing by God — as Hazlitt would say. However I hope I shall not deceive you. — There are some acquaintances of mine who will scratch their Beards and although I have, I hope, some Charity, I wish their nails may be long."

The acquaintances who are to scratch their beards are undoubtedly Abbey and his friends. The conversation in which Abbey derided the idea of Keats adopting poetry as a life career rankled not a little, naturally. The book is to set everything right, it is proof positive that Keats had not mistaken his vocation. Yet he is too wise to trust entirely to the prejudiced enthusiasm of his friends; he

hopes they may not be deceived. Here is the natural delight of a boy in his first book, but also the diffidence of a man who sees considerably farther into possibilities than do most young aspirants to fame. It is just this modesty which gauges Keats's calibre, and perhaps it was this very trait in him quite as much as the promise in the poems he had then written that led Hunt, and the rest of the more experienced of his circle, to count so surely upon his future.

The *Poems*, 1817, is usually said to have been published early in March. Sir Sidney Colvin is more definite, he gives the date of publication as March third. Once again he does not give the source of his information, but circumstantial evidence bears him out. March third, be it remembered, was a Monday, a very proper day of the week on which to have the book appear. There exists a copy of the *Poems* which seems to have been the property of Charles Ollier; in it, some one, presumably Ollier, has written a sonnet to Keats. This sonnet is dated the second of March, 1817. Of course it is possible that the sonnet was written on that date and copied into the book later, but if the book were Ollier's (and no one appears to doubt it) there is good reason to suppose that the date given was that of the sonnet's composition, and that the book was bound and ready some days earlier. Ollier, being the publisher, would have a copy as soon as the volumes came from the binder, of course. If the book were to be issued on Monday, the edition must have been ready a day or two before. A few copies were probably given out to Keats, one of which went to Reynolds. Every one who has to do with writing knows that a book is a totally different thing from its manuscript, or even its proof. Reynolds, with the finished volume fairly in his hands, sees and thinks many things, and these he promptly communicates to Keats — if in conversation, Keats mulls over them and sends a note; if in writing, Keats replies. With Ollier's sonnet and Keats's note, both written on a Sunday, which, in Ollier's case,

we know to have been March second, and, by inference, may suppose the same date for the note, I think we can be certain that the book was issued to the public on Monday, March third.

Ollier's sonnet is so decidedly in the farce, and Keats is so unquestionably the pet lamb, that for both historical and biographical reasons it seems worth while to quote it here:

"Keats I admire thine upward daring Soul,
Thine eager grasp at immortality
I deem within thy reach; — rejoic'd I see
Thee spurn, with brow serene, the gross controul
Of circumstance, while o'er thee visions roll
In radiant pomp of lovely Poesy!
She points to blest abodes where spirits free
Feed on her smiles and her great name extol. —
Still shall the pure flame bright within thee burn
While nature's voice alone directs thy mind;
Who bids thy speculation inward turn
Assuring thee her transcript thou shalt find.
Live her's — live freedom's friend — so round thine urn
The oak shall with thy laurels be entwin'd."

For a publisher to break into poetic eulogy of a client is so very strange an occurrence that this fact alone must have given Keats every assurance of a good reception for his book. The firm was evidently lavish in allowing Keats copies to give away. Hunt, Haydon, and Clarke must each have had one; Reynolds's is still in existence, and one copy was not enough for the Reynolds family, Marianne and Jane had theirs;[1] also, if my memory holds good, I have seen one to Mrs. Reynolds somewhere. George had his special copy,[2] so we may presume that Tom and Fanny had each another. Georgiana Wylie was given one,[3] punctiliously presented by both John and George.

[1] Author's Collection. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] In the possession of Lucius Wilmerding, Esq., of New York.

Severn's [1] contains the merry inscription: "The Author consigns this copy to the Severn with all his Heart." Charles Wells even was not forgotten, but he is gently reminded that he is but a young thing, for Keats writes in it "From J. K. to his young friend Wells." [2] It is not my purpose to draw up a list of all the presentation copies of Keats's three books known to-day. It would, I think, form quite a large catalogue. But there is one other copy of the *Poems* [3] which I must mention. The inscription in it reads "From the author to his Friend, Thos. Richards." Written into the book are Hunt's sonnets on the ivy crowning, and the sonnet which has been attributed to Ollier. The Hunt sonnets are carefully stated to be by him; no name is given in connection with the supposed Ollier poem. This may have some bearing on the authorship of the sonnet in question or it may not. Here are the facts. First: nothing is known about this Richards. A certain C. Richards was the printer of the book, therefore Thomas Richards may have been his son, or his brother, more likely the former. By this token, Ollier and Richards were known to each other and connected in business. Second: several copies of the *Poems* given by Keats to his intimate friends have Hunt's sonnets written in them, but, if I recollect rightly, it is only in the Ollier and Richards copies that this particular anonymous sonnet appears. Third: Keats seems to have known this Thomas Richards well and treated him as a contemporary, whereas Ollier was presumably somewhat older. Four: the Hunt sonnets were known to everybody; the anonymous sonnet to nobody. If Richards had written it, would he not have been likely to show it to Keats, in which case would George not have transcribed it with Hunt's in his book? On the other hand, if Ollier wrote it, might he not have shown it to his printer, but forbidden him to pass it round? The date is

[1] Bemis Collection. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] In the possession of William M. Elkins, Esq., of Philadelphia.

the same in both copies, which looks as though there were collusion. This is all the weakest kind of evidence; what it boils down to is that presumably either Ollier or Richards wrote the sonnet, and probability weighs a little heavier on Ollier's side. I dislike to count guesses as facts, but, after considering everything, I have decided to let the text stand as above. If Ollier did not write the sonnet, he agreed with its sentiments well enough to put it into his copy, always supposing the volume in question to have been his copy. I have not seen it, but Buxton Forman, while not stating Ollier's ownership of it as a proven fact, appears to have no doubt of it.

The actors in this sentimental farce either lost their heads completely, or, with unpardonable cruelty, led their pet lamb directly to the slaughter without a word of preparation. True, Keats must have known that Hunt was the perpetual butt of Tory criticism, and that in dedicating a book to Hunt he was sealing his own doom at the hands of its servants. But to know a thing and to realize it are two very different matters. The glamour of praise blinded his eyes; the cotton-wool of praise dulled his ears. Without being in the least over-weening in his hopes, he did expect fair play. It was just on this point that he should have been warned. The small end of the wedge which apprized the Tory press of his annoying existence had been driven by Hunt himself in his article on the *Young Poets*. In that article, Hunt had quoted the *Chapman's Homer* sonnet. Were Messrs. Lockhart, Wilson, and Company blind that they saw nothing in that poem? Blind and purblind, wound about in the cocoon of a professional war. Poetry is one thing, the politics of poetry quite another, and poor Keats, through his association with Hunt, was immediately and heavily thrown into the very centre of the political arena. But although this article of Hunt's drew the critics' attention and animadversion down on his young poets, the blow did not fall until more than a year and a half later.

The *Poems* came out and — nothing happened. Scarcely a flutter stirred the literary air. The choleric and cocksure reviewers of the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's* were silent. They were biding their time, as we are now aware. Keats was known to be a friend of Leigh Hunt, poems of his had been published in Hunt's paper, the *Examiner*, but not one of Hunt's ferocious enemies gave tongue as yet, nor did they turn their nefarious pens on Keats until the appearance of *Endymion*. *Blackwood's*, indeed, was in its pre-Lockhart, pre-Wilson, stage, being merely, at the moment, an unsuccessful bantling struggling for existence. Its days of influence were a half a year away.

Clarke has expressed the situation on the publication of the *Poems* clearly and decisively:

> "Every one of us expected (and not unreasonably) that it would create a sensation in the literary world . . . Alas! the book might have emerged in Timbuctoo with far stronger chance of fame and approbation. It never passed to a second edition; the first was but a small one, and that was never sold off. The whole community, as if by compact, seemed determined to know nothing about it."

A pleasant state of things truly, for both Keats and his disappointed friends. It must have been some amends to have known the why of the matter, as every one of them did. Impressions were made, but *sotto voce*, as it were, by private persons at their own firesides. For the press, the book was virtually ignored. One small notice in the *Monthly Review* for April was all the attention accorded to it, but this notice, in spite of its extreme brevity (a bare nineteen lines in all), was good. It compared Keats, not unfavourably, with the Elizabethans, and added by way of peroration: "There is in his poems a rapturous glow and intoxication of the fancy — an air of careless and profuse magnificence in his diction — a revelry of the imagination and tenderness of feeling, that forcibly im-

press themselves on the reader." The *Monthly Review* was a standard periodical, but even so, its short, if kindly word, could hardly do more than point the general silence. Months later, the *Poems* was noticed at some length in both Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine* and the *Eclectic Review*, a paper devoted to the interests of nonconformity. The *Eclectic Review*, in its September number, led the way. It admitted a moiety of merit to some of the sonnets, of which *Chapman's Homer* was not one, and allowed "considerable taste and sprightliness" to parts of *I Stood Tip-toe*, but declared that the author of *Sleep and Poetry* was "indeed far gone, beyond the reach of the efficacy either of praise or censure, in affectation and absurdity," and continued with a prophecy so ludicrous to our ears as to be almost amusing, were it not also tragic: "Seriously, however," cries the irritated journalist, "we regret that a young man of vivid imagination and fine talents, should have fallen into so bad hands, as to have been flattered into the resolution to publish verses, of which a few years hence he will be glad to escape from the remembrance." The *Edinburgh Magazine* for October, 1817, praised Keats for modelling much of his work on Spenser, and admitted that this was done with some skill. With unexpected insight, it singled out "the moon lifting her silver rim" passage in *I Stood Tip-toe*, calling it "a glorious and Virgilian conception." It waxed magnificently pompous, however, in a grave warning anent "the appalling doom which awaits the faults of mannerism or the ambition of a sickly refinement," and ended with a dig at Hunt and Hazlitt by announcing that "if Mr. Keats does not forthwith cast off the uncleanness of this school, he will never make his way to the truest strain of poetry in which, taking him by himself, it appears he might succeed." The fact that there was a grain of truth in all this did not make it more palatable. The advice might have been given more gently, but gentleness was not the order of the day in book-

reviewing at that time. Blunderbusses for gnats was the motto of the craft.

Newspaper criticism may wound an author, but it seldom influences him. The real danger in these belated reviews was their effect on the publishers. As to the public, that misty, yet vitally important, entity could scarcely be more indifferent than it was already. Hunt was past wincing; Keats was annoyed, but determined; the others fulminated and consoled. So matters stood; but, before anything of this had happened, something else had come to pass of great importance to Keats.

On a day early in March — probably, indeed, March first — Haydon took Keats to see the Elgin Marbles, already housed in the British Museum. Seeing that Haydon's insight and Haydon's enthusiasm had been the chief factors leading to the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles by the British Nation the year before, no better guide than he for a first visit to them could have been found in all England. Certainly no one knew them half so well. For years he had been studying them, copying them in groups and in detail, he had even made casts of them. They had become an artistic creed to him. Keats was fortunate in his *cicerone*.

The effect of this view of the Marbles was to leave Keats in a state of mind bordering upon stupefaction. Here was a totally different art from any he had known. He had seen Haydon's casts, but casts are to sculpture what translations are to poems. We get in them merely a hint, a teasing possibility, an attempted sketch of a lost impression. The Marbles themselves brought confusion, like a blow on the head. Chapman had invigorated him; the Marbles were too much, they overbore him entirely. He wrote two sonnets on them, or rather, one sonnet on the Marbles and one on Haydon in his rôle of paterfamilias to them. This sonnet *To Haydon, with a sonnet on seeing the Elgin Marbles* is practically worthless. After declaring

that he (Keats) is not of "ample strength" to praise the Marbles, he breaks out in an overdressed tribute to Haydon. If, he says, he could write of them as he wishes,

"... all those numbers should be thine;
Whose else? In this who touch thy vesture's hem?
For when men star'd at what was most divine
With browless idiotism — o'erwise phlegm —
Thou hadst beheld the Hesperean shine
Of their star in the East, and gone to worship them."

This is wretched poetry, and it is a flagging imagination which could represent the Parthenon frieze under the metaphor of the Star of Bethlehem. The truth was, he had said all he could of the Marbles in the other sonnet, which was probably written first, although Haydon puts them the other way about in his journal. A characteristic bit of evidence to the fact that Haydon was more interested in Haydon than in even the Marbles.

The sonnet *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles for the First Time* is much better. The opening passage has the poignance of prophecy, seen as we cannot help seeing it:

"My spirit is too weak — mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die
Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky."

Keats was not weak; but no foreknowledge of the facts could have found a better expression for his last struggle with disease than does his fifth line.

After so stern and solemn a beginning, the sixth line:

"Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep"

comes like a slip into soft mud, with the splash and subsequent jolt. Keats, who loathed mawkishness a little later, had a hard time to rid himself of it. He had to find out its banefulness all by himself, the sentimental farcists

were unable to help him here for the simple reason that they liked the very type of expression which he learnt to detest. Three lines pertaining to the gentle luxury of weeping, I will skip. The end of the sonnet is equal to, and in some ways surpasses, the beginning:

> "Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
> Bring round the heart an indescribable feud;
> So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
> That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
> Wasting of old Time — with a billowy main —
> A sun — a shadow of a magnitude."

"A shadow of a magnitude" is one of the finest and most startling expressions in all poetry. Beautiful, too, is

> ". . . the rude
> Wasting of old Time."

The passage is much injured by "billowy main"; not because the sea is out of place here, but because both "billowy" and "main" are poetic words, jargon words, stock euphemisms of an artificial speech much employed by such "elegant" poets as the Swan of Lichfield and Keats's early admiration, Mrs. Tighe.

"A most dizzy pain" is perfect realism, it is just what Keats felt, but good as it is, I think it was an afterthought. There are signs in this sestet that the first parts of it to be composed were "mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude wasting of old Time" and "a shadow of a magnitude." Thus he saw the Marbles, these phrases were to him absolute description. "Dizzy pain" did, I think, come next, and the rhyme is to blame for "main." Starting the actual writing of his sestet with "So," he completed the last four lines and then went back and worked out the first two. The rather forced word "feud" is another rhyme-impulse, the employment of it gives his progression away. This is, of course, carpentry, but carpentry

necessitated by inspiration. Faultless inspiration in his conception; carpentry, unfortunately, of not too high a grade, not nearly so high as Keats often achieved. All poetry consists of flashes of the subconscious mind and herculean efforts on the part of the conscious mind to equal them. This is where training comes in. The more expert the poet, the better will he fill in the gaps in his inspiration. Revising is the act of consciously improving what has been unconsciously done. Sometimes, but rarely, the subconscious comes to the rescue of the reviser. We have seen this happening in the marigold passage in *I Stood Tip-toe*. In this sestet, Keats filled in rather perfunctorily. He seems too tired for expression. The Marbles gave him a couple of superb epithets, and after them he has nothing to say. Yet his epithets are too good to perish, he must make a sonnet as a frame for them. The octave came easily enough, because in it he does not deal with the actual Marbles at all, but with himself. The weariness of it shows that he has been puzzling his brains over the work, for he knows that his two epithets must end the poem, not begin it; there are, therefore, some twelve lines to be done before he can arrive at them. The first five lines of the octave he does well by begging the question entirely; the next three are time-keeping merely; the sestet is as we have seen.

Haydon was, of course, enchanted with both sonnets; although, in spite of the personal praise in the one especially written to him, he seems to have had the sense to realize that the other was the better poem. In his enthusiasm, he at once sat down and wrote to Keats about them. His letter, as printed, is dated "March, 1817," but Buxton Forman says that it appears from the manuscript copy in Haydon's journal to have been written on March third. There is no mention of the book in it, undoubtedly because the book had not yet reached him. Whoever had advance copies, he does not seem to have been among the number.

Haydon's letter is full of his usual rhodomontade. After thanking Keats for his "two noble sonnets," he flames out: "I know not a finer image than the comparison of a poet unable to express his high feeling to a sick eagle looking at the sky, where he must have remembered his former towering amid the blaze of dazzling sunbeams, in the pure expanse of glittering clouds" etc. etc. We need not follow his eloquence farther; he himself is so much in love with it that he ends the letter without referring to Keats's tribute to himself. One line, however, carefully edited out by his son,[1] speaks volumes; it is,[2] "You filled me with fury for an hour, and with admiration for ever." Here follows a postscript: "I shall expect you and Clarke and Reynolds to-night." But a twinge of conscience assails him and he begins again:

> [3] "My dear Keats —
>
> I have really opened my letter to tell you how deeply I feel the high enthusiastic praise with which you have spoken of me in the first Sonnet — be assured you shall never repent it — the time shall come if God spare my life — when you will remember it with delight —
>
> Once more God bless you
>
> B. R. Haydon."

We see, by this, that in whatever order the sonnets were written, Keats was canny enough to send them to Haydon with the one written to him as the first.

Keats must have had a delightful time that evening with Haydon and Reynolds and Clarke. It is probable that he brought Haydon's copy of the *Poems* with him, and the talk about it must have been a joy to his ears. Then there were the new Elgin Marble sonnets to be read aloud and discussed, with the casts of the Marbles lying round in the painting-room to refer to. Writing years later, Haydon

[1] *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk.* With a Memoir by his Son, Frederick Wordsworth Haydon.
[2] Buxton Forman. [3] Buxton Forman.

says that he thinks that Reynolds was with them when he took Keats to see the Marbles;[1] if such were the case, the comparison of notes must have come in, first impressions weighed against second, familiarity tallied up with the onslaught of a first view. But whatever they talked of, we can imagine that the conversation was forever veering back to the excitement of the new book which was to set the Thames on fire forthwith.

It was a charming little volume, this new book. Just the right slimness to slip easily into a pocket, pleasantly bound in cool-looking drab boards, with "Keats's Poems. Price 6s." on the back label, for all the world as though Keats were somebody already. In the middle of the title-page was a head of Shakespeare, and above it a motto from Spenser's *Fate of the Butterfly*:

> "What more felicity can fall to creature,
> Than to enjoy delight with liberty."

It was only out that day, and nothing had as yet reached Keats's ears but the chorus of praise with which his friends showered him. Hunt, we may suppose, had an advance copy; at any rate, Keats carried the book to Hunt himself. Hunt parenthetically and pleasantly tells of this event, and the place where it occurred. This is what he says:

> [2]"It was in a beautiful lane, running from the road between Hampstead and Highgate to the foot of Highgate Hill, that, meeting me one day, he gave me the volume. If the admirer of Mr. Keats's poetry does not know the lane in question, he ought to become acquainted with it, both on his author's account and on its own. It has been also paced by Mr. Lamb and Mr. Hazlitt, and frequented like the rest of the beautiful neighbourhood, by Mr. Coleridge; so that instead of Milfield Lane, which is the name it is known by 'on earth,' it has sometimes been called Poets' Lane, which is an appellation it richly deserves. It divides

[1] From an unpublished letter in the Bemis Collection.
[2] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt. 1829.

the grounds of Lords Mansfield and Southampton, running through trees and sloping meadows, and being rich in the botany for which this part of the neighbourhood of London has always been celebrated."

All days are not first days, unhappily, and as the days drew into weeks it became increasingly evident that the book was about as far from being a success as anything could be; it was, in fact, a flat failure. The copies would not go off. There they sat on the booksellers' counters, gathering dust and hard opinions. All unbeknownst to Keats and his group, however, the book was making friends. A clever young solicitor, who was a friend of the senior partner of a firm of publishers, and also the firm's reader, read it and liked it so much that he wrote a sonnet about it. The sonnet was not published, and has only recently come to light. It is poor stuff, but the fact that Richard Woodhouse cared enough for the *Poems* to write it, makes it of epochal importance in Keats's life. Here it is:

"TO APOLLO.

Oh thou, whose unimaginable lay
  Wraps in charm'd silence the celestial crew
  Of powers Olympian; who didst an old few
After Troy's fall make tuneful; nor the lay
To our own sires didst scant in happier day;
  But with rich strains high fancies didst imbue.
  And taught'st them makings, such as ever woo
The vacant ear, and will not pass away; —
Have these thy glories perish'd? or in scorn
  Of thankless man hath thy race ceased to quire?
Oh no! thou hear'st! for lo! the beamèd morn
  Chases our night of song: and, from the lyre
Waking long dormant sounds, Keats, thy last born,
  To the glad realm proclaims the coming of his sire."

In the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library, this sonnet is dated "4 Mar. 1818," so I may be wrong in supposing it to belong to the previous year. But Woodhouse

is often guilty of errors of date, and the sonnet bears such evident reference to Keats's battle-cry in *Sleep and Poetry* that I believe it to have been inspired by the *Poems*. Sir Sidney Colvin, indeed, definitely so states, and he has printed the poem, and derived his information, from a totally different source.[1]

Another admirer was Joseph Ritchie, a young surgeon with strong literary tastes. In 1813, he had been House Surgeon at the Lock Hospital, Grosvenor Place. In the Spring of 1814, he took his apothecary's diploma. In 1817, in Paris, he met Humboldt, and soon after was recommended to the British Government as a man qualified by his scientific abilities to head an exploring expedition to the Nigritian Soudan. He died at Murzuk, in Fezzan, before achieving the object of his journey, in November, 1819. We shall hear of Ritchie again. Our immediate concern with him is a passage from an unpublished letter[2] to his intimate friend, the Reverend Richard Garnett, father of Dr. Richard Garnett, for many years librarian of the British Museum. Ritchie's remarks, had they seen them, would have been honey-balm to Keats, Hunt, and the other adherents of the anti-Popean school. This is what he says:

> "If you have not seen the Poems of J. Keats a lad of 19 or 20 — they are worth your reading. If I am not mistaken he is to be the great poetical luminary of the age to come. How vastly glad I am that we are in so fair a train of getting clear of the trammels of French taste & French Criticism & that we may still look forward to seeing in our writers some portion of that manly force and originality which characterizes the men who graced the earliest and best periods of our Literature. Every thing appears to me to show a tendency in the public taste at the present moment to revert to what is truly great & national in our literature & Philosophy — the artificial & unnatural System imported from France by the Writers of Charles II & Anne's Time seems fallen never to rise again."

[1] From *New Notes on Keats*," by Sir Sidney Colvin. London *Times Literary Supplement*. February 19, 1915.

[2] Day Collection.

Ritchie was sanguine; Keats, as a martyr to the cause, could have enlightened him. Perhaps he did, later.

Still another man we know of came under the spell of Keats's *Poems*. This was Benjamin Bailey. Bailey played so large a part in Keats's life for a short period, that I shall reserve any description of him until we reach the time when he and Keats became friends. Suffice it to say here that he was an Oxonian, a friend of Reynolds's, and at the moment, or not long after, paying court to Reynolds's sister, Marianne. Reynolds recommended Keats's *Poems* to Bailey, and Bailey was so much struck with them that, on running up to London for a brief few days, he took pains to make the acquaintance of the author. So Keats and he met for the first time, but the sequel was not yet.

The indifference of the public, and the Elgin Marbles, together acted as irritants to Keats's self-esteem. They stung him to start again, to be up and doing. Already the idea of writing a poem on the story of *Endymion* had been buzzing in his head. We have noticed the fact that even so recently as the middle of December he had spoken of *I Stood Tip-toe* as *Endymion*.[1] But when the poem went to press, the name had been cancelled. Therefore we know that by February, at least, the germ of the longer *Endymion* was fulminating. Medwin relates that Shelley and Keats agreed to write a long poem each during the ensuing Summer. Shelley's was to be *Laon and Cythna*, Keats's to be *Endymion*. This may be true, but Medwin's memory is a vague and unreliable quantity. Yet nothing is more likely than that both these young poets aired their projects sufficiently openly. I should suppose that all the Hunt set knew perfectly well what each was meditating.

Disappointment acts differently upon different natures. With Keats, its effect was to make him itch to be up and at the indifferent public and the silent reviewers with something more imposing. Here was Haydon's chance, his

[1] See Vol. I, p. 140.

opportunity to filch Keats from under Hunt's wing. What he said just at this time, we do not know; what he said a little later will be quoted in due course; what he did was first to write Keats a letter, and second to give him a book.

The letter begins on the usual excitable note. "Consider this a sacred secret," he abjures his correspondent. The secret is a confidence to the effect that when he sits by his fire musing on his work, he is visited by visions of the "mighty dead," whereupon he sinks down and prays the "great Spirit" to make him "worthy to accompany those immortal beings in their immortal glories." At this, each floating ghost smiles upon him and nods its head in "awful encouragement." We can clearly see that here Haydon, while indulging to the full the delights of self-revelation, is also hinting an encouragement to Keats. He continues:

> "My dear Keats, the Friends who surrounded me were sensible to what talent I had, — but no one reflected my enthusiasm with that burning ripeness of soul, my heart yearned for sympathy, — believe me from my soul, in you I have found one, — you add fire, when I am exhausted, and excite fury afresh — I offer my heart and intellect and experience — at first I feared your ardour might lead you to disregard the accumulated wisdom of ages in moral points — but the feelings put forth lately have delighted my soul — always consider principle of more value than genius — and you are safe — because on the score of genius, you can never be vehement enough. I have read your "Sleep and Poetry" — it is a flash of lightning which will rouse men from their occupations, and keep them trembling for the crash of thunder that *will* follow.
>
> God bless you! let our hearts be buried on each other.
>
> B. R. Haydon."

This letter has no date save "March 1817," but it is evident that it was written fairly early in the month. Cruel fact had not yet disproved Haydon's hopes for his friend. There are sentences here the meaning of which is as clear as day. Haydon has been alarmed lest Keats was

succumbing to Hunt's and Shelley's religious theories. He cannot bear to see this promising neophyte revolving in Hunt's orbit, either morally or intellectually; he offers the tale of the visions to introduce the efficacy of prayer. This was no hypocrisy on Haydon's part. He did, and often did, just what he has here stated. That he mistook the type of Keats's mind is shown in every line of the letter; but no matter, he did what he could to wrest Keats away from that part of his daily life which did not include himself. He meant well, and, on the whole, did well, at this juncture.

The book which was to stamp his precepts, to rouse a heroic mood, the mood of the Marbles, and fit Keats for great deeds, was Goldsmith's *History of Greece*. The first volume bears the inscription, "To John Keats, from his ardent friend, B. R. Haydon, 1817." I have no absolute proof that Haydon gave the book to Keats at exactly this time, but circumstances and the similarity of tone between the letter just quoted and the inscription make it, I think, obvious.

If Haydon's ardour were undiminished, it was growing increasingly clear that that of the publishers was not. Their enthusiasm was visibly cooling. The chill of the book's non-sale was seriously affecting their tempers. Like all inexperienced authors suffering the smart of failure, Keats seems to have considered that the fault lay in the publishers' methods. The book was not being handled properly; the Olliers were not pushing it. This is the old cry of disappointed authorship echoing down the generations. The seasoned authors of Keats's acquaintance were in a quandary. If they told him that a book was far less at the mercy of the firm which published it than might appear, they were simply adding an extra drop of poison to Keats's inflamed sensibilities; besides, they had predicted success, and its failure to arrive reflected somewhat adversely on their powers of divination. They seem to have sat on the fence as regards the publishers' share in the

matter. But Keats had all the sympathy he wanted on this score from his brothers and Reynolds. Reynolds, who had already undergone the experience of changing publishers and had found his new firm obliging, energetic, and cordial, was ready with a suggestion. Why should not Keats make a change? He was meditating a new poem which the Olliers must certainly not issue. Keats must follow his example, and give his new book to Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, of 93 Fleet Street. These gentlemen had, the year before, brought out Reynolds's *Naiad*, and he was on the pleasantest terms with them.

Who introduced Keats to Taylor and Hessey has been a much discussed question. Sir Sidney Colvin suggests that Bailey was the connecting medium. This may be so, I am not convinced of it. Sir Sidney bases his theory on the fact that Bailey was a friend of Taylor's, but so was Reynolds, and Reynolds's letters to Taylor are far more intimate in tone than Bailey's, still that may be because Bailey was a rather formal person and Reynolds was quite the opposite. It is possible that Bailey introduced Reynolds to Taylor in the first place, or it may have been the other way round. Reynolds, who was already an old hand at publishing, and who moved in a literary set, might have met Taylor in various ways. The letters I have seen to Taylor from both Bailey and Reynolds are of a later date than 1817, when there had been ample time for acquaintance to ripen into friendship. If methods of address and signature are of any significance, Reynolds either begins "Dear Taylor" or "Dear John" and signs himself "Ever yours" or "Yours ever most truly"; Bailey varies his form of address from "My dear Taylor" to "My dear Sir," he never uses Taylor's Christian name, but he signs himself "Yrs Affectly," "Your affectionate friend," "Yours most faithfully," indeed he signs himself in almost any manner, even down to "Yours very truly." Personally, I think the lack of the Christian name speaks more loudly than the "affectionately." Let us grant, then, that it is a

mooted question whether Reynolds owed his introduction to Taylor to Bailey or Bailey his to Reynolds; but, admitting that, by the Spring of 1817 Reynolds had known Taylor certainly more than a year, was on the spot, and was the obvious person to bring Keats and Taylor together. Bailey might have acted as intermediary on the occasion when he was in town, but where would have been the need of him with Reynolds constantly there? The circumstances of the case point so much more sensibly to Reynolds that I cannot doubt that he was the actual introducer.

In meeting Taylor, Keats took one of the most fortunate steps in his life. From that moment, his publishing affairs became a bed of roses. Taylor seems to have been a shrewd enough man in his ordinary course of business, but his attitude toward Keats was positively Utopian. We may lay this to the fact that his intimate friend and confidential adviser was Richard Woodhouse. It was not long after the connection between Keats and the firm of Taylor and Hessey was formed that the firm became in some sort Keats's bankers. Advance payments to Keats were frequent, and loans upon an indefinite security, and it was ten to one that these loans, although nominally emanating from Taylor, drew their substance from the purse of Woodhouse. I shall refer to this later, and quote a letter from Woodhouse to Taylor substantiating a fact which has, I believe, not been known hitherto.

Before continuing the story, I must act the part of Reynolds and introduce these three excellent men, Taylor, Hessey, and Woodhouse, to the reader.

John Taylor was born at East Retford, Nottinghamshire, in July, 1781. He was, therefore, a man of thirty-five when Keats made his acquaintance. Somewhere about 1806, he had come up to London and formed a partnership with a certain James Augustus Hessey, under the firm name of "Taylor and Hessey," for the publishing and retail selling of books. Taylor was a man of high character, his tastes

were scholarly, and he was the originator of the theory that Sir Philip Francis was the author of the famous *Letters of Junius*. In support of his opinion, he published in 1813 a book entitled *A Discovery of the Author of the Letters of Junius*, this was followed, in 1816, by *The Identity of Junius with a distinguished Living Character Established*, and, in 1817, by *A Supplement to Junius Identified*. He was interested in philology, as various letters to him from Woodhouse and Reynolds show,[1] although he does not seem to have written anything on the subject. The firm published Hazlitt, Reynolds, John Clare, etc. and were, at the time of Keats's connection with them, a well-to-do and rising house. In 1821, Taylor and Hessey bought the *London Magazine*, of which Taylor constituted himself unannounced editor, with Thomas Hood as sub-editor. At the same time, the business plant was divided, the publishing department, and the offices of the magazine, moving to Waterloo Place, while the retail shop, under Hessey's superintendence, remained in Fleet Street. In later years, Hessey retired from the partnership, and the firm became "Taylor and Walton," and under this name acted as official publishers to the University of London.

Taylor, whose younger brother James was a banker at Bakewell, was much exercised over the currency question, strongly advocating a return to bimetallism; on this subject, he wrote voluminously. In later life, he devoted himself to classic and Biblical studies. He never married, but lived a long and busy life among his books, not dying until 1864. Taylor seems always to have been more interested in scholarship than in literature, but his warm friendship with Richard Woodhouse corrected this tendency so far as his publishing was concerned. The two men seem to have made an excellent working combination, although there is no sign that Woodhouse was ever even a sleeping partner in the firm. He was, however, its chief,

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

if not its only, reader, and very likely drew a salary for acting in that capacity. It is usually assumed that Taylor lived "at the business" in 93 Fleet Street. But this appears to be an error. After examining the contexts and addresses on a number of letters to him from various people, I am certain that it was Hessey who lived in Fleet Street, and that Taylor lived, or had rooms, at 91 New Bond Street. Even Hessey writes to him there in a letter which, though undated, is evidently written from the Fleet Street shop. Bailey, whose letters are not on business, almost always addresses them to New Bond Street. On one occasion, when Taylor is taking a vacation in the country, Woodhouse writes: "You are probably at this moment (N.B. 1/2 p. 6 P.M.) engaged in deep chat with the very individual, who has been beaming looks of benignity from his canvas over Hessey, Mrs. H., your humble, and a cold leg of mutton." [1] Half-past six P.M. means after dinner, and the obvious usualness of the occasion seems to indicate that the Hesseys were eating at their own accustomed dinner-table, even though the portrait of Taylor's father hung upon the wall. On another occasion, writing from Fleet Street, Woodhouse remarks: "I am taking tea with Hessey." [2] Henry C. Shelley in *Literary By-Paths in Old England* says that "the shop and the storerooms of the publishing business were in front," the living rooms being at the back. But this seems not to have been so, for Woodhouse speaks of people "book-buying in the back shop." I think the likeliest supposition is that the back rooms served as both shop and living apartments. I have gone into this so minutely because the Fleet Street premises, both shop and living rooms, quickly became one of Keats's chief haunts. The firm not only published and sold current books, it dealt in second-hand books as well. It seems to have been altogether an energetic and money-making concern. Taylor, it appears, ran the publishing end, while Hessey attended to the retail business.

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection. [2] *Ibid.*

Of James Augustus Hessey, we know very little. Taylor has been considered of sufficient importance to be included in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; Hessey is nowhere to be found. Our information concerning him is extremely slight, consisting of very little beside the facts that he was born in 1785 and died in 1870, and that he was married. Lord Houghton, who applied to Reynolds for information about him, learned only that he managed the firm's retail business, and that, in Reynolds's words, "he was a very respectable man — but of no moment in the memoir" of Keats. He must have been a nice person, for Keats nicknamed him "Mistessey," and one does not nickname a man unless he is a good fellow. He had a son, who afterwards became Archdeacon Hessey. There our knowledge of him practically ends. But it is quite plain from the correspondence that, without any of Taylor's varied attainments, he was a gentle, friendly being, devoted to his wife and his work. He is never of the sociable gatherings which Taylor and Woodhouse frequented. Taylor and Woodhouse, both being bachelors, were freer of foot than he. We read of card-parties at Brown's, when Keats lived with him, at which both Taylor and Woodhouse were present, but there is never any mention of Hessey. His relations with Keats and Reynolds seem to have been purely those of business, although the letters to Taylor invariably contain kind messages to him. It is probable that when he and Taylor dissolved their partnership, the book-selling end of the business was acquired by Hessey, who continued to run it under his own name. Even so early as 1827, Taylor's name had disappeared from the shop, although it is evident from his title-pages of the period that he still retained an interest in it. In 1830, Hessey gave up bookselling and became a "Book & Print and Picture Auctioneer"[1] and in 1835 he "took a large

[1] Letters from Taylor to Clare in *New Sidelights on Keats, Lamb, and Others. From Letters to J. Clare*, by Edmund Blunden. The *London Mercury*, June, 1921.

old school at Hampstead," but whether with a view to becoming school-master or merely as a place of residence I have not been able to find out.

So much for Keats's publishers, as for Taylor's running mate, the important, unofficial fifth wheel of the partnership, Richard Woodhouse, there is, unhappily, very little to say. In spite of marked abilities, Woodhouse never distinguished himself sufficiently to gain admittance to any encyclopædia. What is known of him has been gleaned by the painstaking efforts of Lord Houghton, Buxton Forman, and Sir Sidney Colvin, to which accounts I am able to supplement information contained in a letter from a niece, written to Mr. W. van R. Whitall, who has given me permission to make what use I please of it. From these various sources, I learn that Richard Woodhouse was descended from an old Herefordshire family. Who or what his father was, no one says, except that he was owner, or part owner, of the White Hart Inn at Bath. Whether this proprietorship absorbed all Mr. Woodhouse Senior's energies, or was merely one of several properties, I have not been able to discover, but it is known that the family had business relations with Spain and Portugal. At the time we are speaking of, he lived at 8 Duke Street, Bath. Richard Woodhouse was born in 1788, the oldest of a family of fourteen children. How this large family was divided as to boys and girls, is not stated, but eight of the brothers lived to grow up. Of these, one became a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, one a Church of England clergyman, three were wine merchants, and the next to the youngest was called to the bar, although he never practised. The career of the eighth brother is obscure. Richard himself was educated at Eton, but did not go on to a University; instead, he became a solicitor, with chambers at Kings Bench Walk, Temple. Woodhouse was deeply interested in literature; he dabbled in verse, but does not seem to have published anything in either verse or prose. He appears to have had

some means, but whether this money was inherited, or was in the nature of an allowance from his father, or was derived from his law practice, is not clear. Neither do we know how he and Taylor came to be so intimate, nor for how many years Woodhouse had been reader to Taylor before the Spring of 1817. From the very first moment of his reading the *Poems*, 1817, Woodhouse seems to have been firmly convinced of Keats's future. Very shortly after Keats's connection with the firm, Woodhouse began to make, and keep, transcripts of his poems, and to collect whatever stray matter concerning him he could lay his hands on. I have already quoted[1] a remarkable note made by Woodhouse in one of his transcript books,[2] which shows how thoroughly he believed in the permanent value of Keats's work. Woodhouse was a good judge of general effect, hence his value as a publisher's reader, but he was an extremely poor critic of detail. He was prone to make suggestions, and tried his hand at several would-be improvements in Keats's poems with the utmost complaisance. It is needless to say that his emendations were invariably failures. Woodhouse had a useful reading knowledge of French, Spanish, and Italian; indeed, he seems to have been an eclectic devourer of books in all these tongues as well as his own. He was also a keen appreciator of the new schools of poetry of his day. Because of this bias, he was able to temper Taylor's classical leanings to the extent of making the firm progressive as well as solid. In later life, he was one of the founders of the Law Life Insurance Society. That Woodhouse was a level-headed man, is proved by the fact that, much as he loved literature, he did not himself attempt to write for publication. The impression we get of him is that, in spite of a good deal of sentimentality, and a weak critical sense in regard to technical detail, he was a kindly, wise, and upright man.

[1] See Vol. I, p. 61. [2] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Library.

I cannot find out that he ever married. He died of pulmonary tuberculosis,[1] in September, 1834, at the comparatively early age of forty-six.

When Reynolds suggested to Taylor that his firm take on the author of that fine failure, the *Poems*, recently issued by the Olliers, we stand aghast at his temerity. One does not usually introduce a client to a publisher with the inducement of a perfectly unsaleable book. But the faith of Keats's friends seems to have been profoundly oblivious to all common-sense rules. Keats was not selling, therefore Taylor must take him on. The odd fact is that this Quixotic proposition does not seem to have staggered Taylor. Perhaps he had already heard Woodhouse's opinion of the book. We need no double-barrelled eye-glasses to see that Woodhouse was responsible for Taylor's surrender. He and Reynolds could point triumphantly to the Elgin Marble sonnets, published in the *Examiner* of March ninth, and to *The Floure and the Lefe* sonnet, which was printed in the same paper a week later, on March sixteenth. Taylor, accustomed to rely on Woodhouse, seems to have raised no objection to this gambling proposition; so here was Keats, duly installed as one of Taylor and Hessey's authors, under contract to give them his next book as soon as might be, with no syllable of that book yet written.

Along with the proof-reading, publishing, and scant writing of the Winter, there had been a good deal of gadding. Too many card-parties, reunions, long exciting talks leading to sleepless nights. It was all beginning to tell a little on Keats's nerves. Haydon saw this, and was troubled. That great long poem which Keats was committed to, how was it ever going to be written in the midst of this well-meaning social hurly-burly? Everything had conspired — Chapman's *Homer*, the Elgin Marbles, the ob-

[1] Letters from Taylor to Clare in *New Sidelights on Keats, Lamb, and Others. From Letters to J. Clare*, by Edmund Blunden. The *London Mercury*, June, 1921.

livious reviewers — to force upon Keats the necessity of producing a poem of some length which should carry the weight of a real achievement. "Go away," urged Haydon, "leave everybody and everything. Go off somewhere alone, where you will have leisure to look into your own mind and see what you can get out of it." I am not quoting, I am imagining; but something like this Haydon must have said, for Keats writes to Reynolds, in an undated letter which Buxton Forman, for some reason best known to himself, attributes to "March, 1817," as follows:

> "My Brothers are anxious that I should go by myself into the country — they have always been extremely fond of me, and now that Haydon has pointed out how necessary it is that I should be alone to improve myself, they give up the temporary pleasure of living with me continually for a great good which I hope will follow. So I shall soon be out of Town. You must soon bring all your present troubles to a close, and so must I, but we must, like the Fox, prepare for a fresh swarm of flies. Banish money — Banish sofas — Banish Wine — Banish Music; but right Jack Health, honest Jack Health, true Jack Health — Banish Health and banish all the world."

The last passage here is a parody of Falstaff's speech in the second act of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. This is important to note, because it shows that Keats had Shakespeare on the tip of his tongue. He seems, at the moment, to be absolutely feeding upon Shakespeare. Throughout his life, he is given to quoting Shakespeare, whom he appears to have known almost by heart; but during this Spring, Shakespeare seems to have been hardly out of his mind a single instant.

We can make no guess as to what determined Keats on where to go. The South coast had done him a great deal of good the Summer before, that may have been the reason for his deciding on it again. But he was curious

enough to want to try a new place, and he seems to have gone off rather in the dark as to where he should finally fix.

If Buxton Forman's date to the Reynolds letter be correct, Keats did not start on his *villeggiatura* immediately. Yet he was anxious to be off, the type of social distraction which Hunt calls "one of our old evenings joco-serio-musico-pictorio-poetical" was beginning to bore him a little. Hunt himself did not seem either so stimulating, or so wise, as he used to be. Keats was becoming dimly aware of the farce, and was fretting against it and his position in it. On Wednesday, April ninth, he was at Hunt's, probably to bid him good-bye. To this period seems to belong a little undated scrap of a note,[1] directed simply "Messrs. Taylor & Hessey." Keats's new publishers appear to have given him some standing invitation, or offered him some privilege, of which, under the circumstances, he was unable to avail himself. The collective and formal address shows that Keats's acquaintance with the members of the firm was a very recent thing, it is therefore this journey to which the note must refer.

> "My dear Sirs
>
> I am very unfortunate for I am just going out and have not a sheet of paper handy — so I can only beg pardon for this scrap — and thank you for your kindness which will be of little use for I will steal out of town in a day or two — excuse this shabby affair
>
> Yours
> John Keats."

On Monday, April fourteenth, he booked an outside seat for Southampton on the Lymington and Poole Mail, leaving the Bull and Crown Inn, Holborn, at half-past seven on that very evening. Shortly after three in the morning, the mail clattered through the little village of Chawton,

[1] Not before published. Author's Collection.

past a small cottage standing directly beside the road. In this cottage lived a widow lady, Mrs. George Austen, and her two daughters, Cassandra and Jane. Did Jane Austen wake just as day was breaking on that Tuesday morning and listen to the mail going by? I wonder.

Four hours later, at seven o'clock, the mail drew up before the door of the Coach and Horses Inn at Southampton. Almost the first thing that Keats did on arrival was to sit down and write to his brothers. This letter shows so much of him — his observation, his descriptive faculty, his poetry withal — that I shall quote it at some length:

> "I am safe at Southampton — after having ridden three stages outside and the rest in for it began to be very cold. I did not know the Names of any of the Towns I passed through — all I can tell you is that sometimes I saw dusty Hedges — sometimes Ponds — then nothing — then a little Wood with trees look you like Launce's Sister 'as white as a Lilly and as small as a Wand' [1] — then came houses which died away into a few straggling Barns — then came hedge trees aforesaid again. As the Lamplight crept along the following things were discovered — 'long heath broom furze' — Hurdles here and there half a Mile — Park palings when the Windows of a House were always discovered by reflection — One Nymph of Fountain — N.B. Stone — lopped Trees — Cow ruminating — ditto Donkey — Man and Woman going gingerly along — William seeing his Sisters over the Heath — John waiting with a Lanthorn for his Mistress — Barber's Pole — Doctor's Shop — However after having had my fill of these I popped my Head out just as it began to Dawn — *N.B. This tuesday Morn saw the Sun rise* — of which I shall say nothing at present. I felt rather lonely this Morning at breakfast so I went and unbox'd a Shakspeare — '*There's my Comfort*' [2] — I went immediately after Breakfast to Southampton Water where I enquired for the Boat to the Isle of Wight as I

[1] Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Very likely the trees were silver birches. [2] Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

intend seeing that place before I settle — it will go at 3. So shall I after having taken a Chop."

Of the town, he says:

"I know nothing of this place but that it is long — tolerably broad — has by streets — two or three Churches — a very respectable old Gate with two Lions to guard it — the Men and Women do not materially differ from those I have been in the Habit of seeing — I forgot to say that from dawn till half past six I went through a most delightful Country — some open Down but for the most part thickly wooded. What surprised me most was an immense quantity of blooming Furze on each side the road cutting a most rural dash . . . You, Haydon, Reynolds, &c. have been pushing each other out of my Brain by turns — I have conned over every Head in Haydon's Picture[1] — you must warn them not to be afraid should my Ghost visit them on Wednesday . . . I hope one of you will be competent to take part in a Trio while I am away — you need only aggravate your voices a little and mind not to speak Cues and all[2]. . . Remember me particularly to all my Friends — give my love to the Miss Reynoldses and to Fanny who I hope you will soon see. Write to me soon about them all — and you George particularly how you get on with Wilkinson's plan."

We see more than a little homesickness here. This is not at all the mood of the Margate vacation. Keats had not more than half wanted to go away. He had itched to get into the mood to write his poem, but the mood has not found him yet. If he were bored and a little impatient of his surroundings while still in town, these same surroundings look immensely pleasant in recollection. His preoccupations are abundantly evident here, and it is clear that Hunt is not one of them. It is also worth remarking that Georgiana Wylie receives no direct message, which bears out my contention about Keats's attitude toward

[1] *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.*
[2] Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

her at this date.[1] His asking George how he gets on with Wilkinson's plan probably refers to some new business venture which George had started upon. The letter is addressed to "Mr. G. Keats, No. 1 Well Walk, Hampstead, Middx.," so that the Keats brothers must have moved there before John started on his trip, or George and Tom may have moved out on the very day that John set off for Southampton. It was undoubtedly this removal which determined the date of John's journey.

At three, went the boat to the Isle of Wight, and in it went John Keats, bound ostensibly for Cowes, but in reality for solitary contemplation, and the beginning of that great work already determined upon, and already christened *Endymion*.

The sixteen miles of water from Southampton to Cowes is minutely described in a guide-book to the Isle of Wight, the second edition of which was published in 1811. If Keats fell in with this beguiling volume when he was deciding where to spend his country sojourn, we cannot wonder at his choice. "The air has long had the character of salubrity," declares this entrancing book, and as a proof cites the fact that "the longevity of the inhabitants is well known." Among other bits of valuable information the reader is informed that "the *sheep* annually shorn have been rated at 40,000; and not less than 5,000 lambs have been sold in one year to the London butchers. The cows are principally of the Alderney breed, though mixed with others of English complexion." Sportsmen are assured that "hares, partridges, and pheasants . . . may be termed plentiful," while less actively inclined souls are told that "The Isle of Wight has not infrequently been styled the *garden of England*." The little volume goes on to enumerate hills, dales, woods, chines, and prospects, in a manner which few travellers could resist. In spite of the presence of some of the oddest looking "gentlemen's seats" that

[1] See Vol. I, p. 245.

ever graced a countryside, the Isle of Wight was, in those days, a rural, peaceful, simple, and lovely place, how simple may be gathered from this statement, "the roads are very indifferent, and in some parts absolutely impassable for carriages except in the finest weather." No wonder that Keats wanted to see it before determining on where to settle.

Arrived at Cowes, Keats took coach for the five miles to Newport. The mail road, as it is called in our guide-book, although not a turnpike for "there are no turnpikes throughout the island," ran from Cowes to Newport. Among other objects of interest on the way, was a building called the "House of Industry," a charming spot containing "a chapel, a pest house, a house for the smallpox, cells for delinquents, and a place of internment." We may hope that this dismal reminder of disease and death was unremarked by Keats; but a still more sinister sight which he did remark were the barracks, standing just on the edge of Parkhurst Forest. Our guide-book tells us all about them: "They are a depôt for recruits, such as formerly used to be at Chatham; whence they easily escaped by means of the river Medway, and effectually concealed themselves in the overgrown metropolis of the British Empire. Twelve hundred feet by seven hundred is the extent of ground occupied by the barracks, which have every possible accommodation. Near it on the North is the *hospital*, containing a number of convenient wards."

Keats is so modern a man in his outlook on life that we are apt to overlook some of the special aspects of his time. The England of Keats's day was full of contradictions, and one of them was the cynical disregard of individual claims where the army and navy were concerned. What a melancholy state of things our guide-book opens up! The barracks are set here precisely in order that the miserable recruits — poor ignorant country yokels, lured by drink and the glisten of the King's shilling to join the colours —

may not be able to run away. Here they suffered a misery they had never dreamed possible, where "a number of convenient wards" were necessary to keep them from dying outright before having smelt the smoke of a single battle. Keats hated a red coat, and all it stood for, with a holy hatred. We have already had a hint of this in his Epistle to my Brother George.[1] The sight of these barracks dismayed him. Writing two days later to Reynolds, he says:

> "On the road from Cowes to Newport I saw some extensive Barracks which disgusted me extremely with the Government for placing such a Nest of Debauchery in so beautiful a place. I asked a man on the coach about this — and he said that the people had been spoiled. In the room where I slept at Newport, I found this on the Window — 'O Isle spoilt by the Milatary!'"

The day following Keats's arrival at Newport, he spent running over the island trying to decide where he should settle down. He relates his doings in the letter of April seventeenth, from which I have just quoted, so much better than I can do, that I give them in his own words:

> "Ever since I wrote to my Brothers from Southampton, I have been in a taking, and at this moment I am about to become settled, for I have unpacked my books, put them into a snug corner, pinned up Haydon, Mary Queen of Scots, and Milton with his daughters seated in a row. In the passage I found a head of Shakespeare, which I had not before seen. It is most likely the same that George spoke so well of, for I like it extremely. Well — this head I have hung over my books, just above the three in a row, having first discarded a French Ambassador — now this alone is a good morning's work. Yesterday I went to Shanklin, which occasioned a great debate in my mind whether I should live there or at Carisbrooke. Shanklin is a most beautiful place; sloping wood and meadow ground reach round the Chine, which is a cleft between the Cliffs of the depth of nearly 300 feet at least. This cleft is filled

[1] See Vol. I, p. 162.

with trees and bushes in the narrow part, and as it widens becomes bare, if it were not for primroses on one side, which spread to the very verge of the Sea, and some fishermen's huts on the other, perched midway in the Balustrades of beautiful green Hedges along their steps down to the sands. But the sea, Jack, the sea — the little waterfall — then the white cliff — then St. Catherine's Hill — 'the sheep in the meadows, the cows in the corn.' Then, why are you at Carisbrooke? say you. Because, in the first place, I should be at twice the Expense, and three times the inconvenience — next that from here I can see your continent — from a little hill close by, the whole north Angle of the Isle of Wight, with the water between us. In the 3rd place, I see Carisbrooke Castle from my window, and have found several delightful wood-alleys, and copses, and quick freshes.[1] As for primroses, the Island ought to be called Primrose Island — that is, if the nation of Cowslips agree thereto, of which there are diverse Clans just beginning to lift up their heads. Another reason for my fixing is, that I am more in reach of the places around me. I intend to walk over the Island — east — West — North — South. I have not seen many specimens of Ruins — I don't think however I shall ever see one to surpass Carisbrooke Castle."

Keats lodged at a Mrs. Cooke's, New Village, Carisbrooke, less than a mile out of Newport. One reason for his fixing there, we may assume, knowing his habits, to have been the presence of what our guide-book calls "one of the brightest ornaments of this town," namely "a permanent public library." "The most respectable gentlemen in the island are among its members," declares that enthusiastic store-house of information, and goes on to say that its frequenters "are also accommodated with newspapers, the principal reviews, and other periodical publications of the day. It is conducted on the most liberal principles, and has a considerable collection of books in various languages."

[1] Shakespeare's *Tempest.*

The newspapers and periodicals may well have been an inducement to so homesick a man as Keats was at the moment. How homesick, can be seen from another passage in this same letter:

> "The wind is in a sulky fit, and I feel it would be no bad thing to be the favourite of some Fairy, who would give one the power of seeing how our Friends got on at a Distance. I should like, of all Loves, a sketch of you and Tom and George in ink which Haydon will do if you tell him how I want them."

Loneliness is beginning to prey upon him. Each day is age long. "Ever since I wrote to my Brothers from Southampton." Ever since! It is only two days. The truth is that neither Keats nor his friends had the slightest idea what the weight of complete solitude means during the strain of creation. When one has worked all one can for the moment, and the brain is hot and agitated and incapable of relief from itself, something, some one, must be there to ease it off into quiet. Keats was in the habit of talking himself free from whatever worried him. Here he was alone, with nothing to do when he had got through his daily stint but think about what he had written and what he would write. Even in walking one can think, in reading one must use one's mind, and Keats had only walking and reading to relieve him from work. The result was, of course, that the rest times were more restless and fatiguing than the working ones. During the first days at Carisbrooke, he was not writing, he was considering what to write, or rather, how to enclose in verse the chaotic magnificence which was surging in his mind. It is more difficult to plan a poem than it is to write it when the plan is formed. Keats was totally ignorant of how such planning is done. A long poem was a new departure for him. He felt that it was time for him to make such an attempt, but he dreaded it as well. I do not suppose that any one not a

poet can realize the agony of creating a poem. Every nerve, even every muscle, seems strained to the breaking point. The poem will not be denied, to refuse to write it would be a greater torture. It tears its way out of the brain, splintering and breaking its passage, and leaves that organ in the state of a jelly-fish when the task is done. And yet to have no poem to write is the worst state of all. Truly a poet's life is not a happy one. Broken and shattered when creating, miserable and void when not creating, urged always to a strain which cannot heal except through immense pain, peaceful only in the occasional consciousness of a tolerable achievement — certainly the poor creature must be born to his calling, for no man would take on such an existence willingly. This is just the difference between the poet and the poetaster, I think. Does a man create with his blood and sinews, and suffer in so doing? If he does not, give no heed to his works, they are still-born.

Keats says it all in his letters at this time; they are a very mine to the psychologist who would study the workings of the creative faculty. In the letter to Reynolds so often quoted, but under the new date of April eighteenth, is this passage:

> "I find I cannot exist without Poetry — without eternal Poetry — half the day will not do — the whole of it — I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan. I had become all in a Tremble from not having written anything of late — the Sonnet over-leaf did me good. I slept the better last night for it — this Morning, however, I am nearly as bad again."

"Over-leaf," on April seventeenth, he had written out the sonnet on the sea, *It keeps eternal whisperings*. He prefaces it by saying: "From want of regular rest I have been rather *narvus* — and the passage in *Lear* — 'Do you not hear the sea?' has haunted me intensely." The haunting passage is this:

"Hark, do you hear the sea? . . .

. . . . . .

Come on, Sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:
The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge,
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong."

It is strange, in Keats's sonnet, to note where it follows Shakespeare and where Keats's own experience is the sole guide. Since this cannot be done without comparison, I will give the whole sonnet here:

"ON THE SEA.

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such a gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be mov'd for days from where it sometime fell,
When last the winds of Heaven were unbound.
Oh ye! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tir'd,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
Oh ye! whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,
Or fed with too much cloying melody—
Sit ye near some old Cavern's Mouth and brood
Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quired."

Curiously enough, the effect of the sea seen from a height, which is the very essence of Shakespeare's lines,

and which was an actual daily vision to Keats from the cliff-edges of the Isle of Wight, has no part in his picture here. The sonnet is less a picture than a synthesis. Its added depth and seriousness, its awareness of the ocean's vast, majestic indifference, of the consolation offered by the view of this resistless force and overwhelming elemental grandeur, show how far Keats had moved since the year before, when he was at Margate. Admirable as was his sea picture in the sonnet, *To my Brother George*, written there, cogent as were its suggestions, it cannot be compared to this new sonnet, so greatly does the last poem surpass the first.

Shakespeare's lines serve as a text rather than a starting-point. Keats's "shell" is Shakespeare's "pebbles," that is the nearest approach to a parallel to be found, although the "eye-balls" were probably suggested by the long impression of sight in the *Lear* passage, combined with the recollection of Gloucester's being blind. Weary eye-balls soothed by the sea's immensity, is a flash of revelation into Keats's state of mind. So tired, so strained, so tossed was he by the fever of his imagination, and here was a peace beyond his seeking, a magnitude the contemplation of which was rest. "Cloying melody" — he must get away from that; in those words and their context the sentimental farce is snuffed out like a candle-wick between his fingers. Here, beyond Chapman's *Homer*, beyond even the Elgin Marbles, is the healing wonder of the mighty, law-abiding, everlasting sea.

The first lines of the sonnet seem to take colour from the scenery of the *Tempest*, the rest is pure synthetic imagination. The only awkwardness throughout the poem is that the order of the rhymes in the sestet is a little uncouth and teasing, and that "quired" for "choired" is odd, and a questionable rhyme for "tir'd."

This sonnet is one of Keats's best, as he must have known; but, successful though it was, it could not quiet

him because *Endymion* was pressing to be done. Keats was fully alive to the immensity of the task he had set himself, and in many ways he felt that he was not ready for it. But he realized also that fugitive pieces would not do forever, that he must strive after something bigger. Already he had planned at least the length of his poem, and that alone was sufficiently formidable. In an undated letter to George, he says, "It will be a test, a trial of my powers of imagination and chiefly of invention by which I must make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with poetry." Keats was wise enough to understand that the fugitive pieces of men capable of great work have in them, perforce, the quality of their creators, a quality which can never imbue the fugitive pieces of lesser poets. To make even his sonnets of value, he must be able to grasp and secure more extended conceptions. It is not the size of a poem which counts; it is the calibre of the man who writes it. His acquaintance with this truth is evident from some remarks in this same letter:

> "As to what you say about my being a Poet, I can return no Answer but by saying that the high Idea I have of poetical fame makes me think I see it towering too high above me. At any rate, I have no right to talk until *Endymion* is finished . . . Did our great Poets ever write Short Pieces? I mean in the shape of Tales."

After something like a week, Keats found that he could not stand the loneliness, so he left Carisbrooke and went to Margate, at the same time sending for Tom to join him there.

Biographers differ as to whether Keats began *Endymion* at Carisbrooke, or not until he reached Margate. I am convinced from the evidence in hand that he began it in the Isle of Wight. This evidence is as follows: At the end of the letter to Reynolds, the second part of which is dated "April 18th," he says: "I shall forthwith begin my Endy-

mion." He wrote to Hunt on May tenth, from Margate, speaking of his wearing himself out with thinking at Carisbrooke: "In a week or so, I became not over capable in my upper stories, and set off pell-mell for Margate"; and again, "I began my poem about a fortnight since, and have done some every day, except travelling ones." The "travelling ones" are, of course, those days spent in going from Carisbrooke to Margate. A "fortnight since" would take him back to April twenty-sixth, but he only says "*about* a fortnight." A week at Carisbrooke would take him to April twenty-third, but he only says "a week or so." He tells Haydon, on May tenth: "I was there but a Week." On May sixteenth, he writes Taylor and Hessey: "I went day by day at my poem for a Month . . . was obliged to give up for a few days." Taking all these remarks into consideration and tallying one with another, the fact that Keats began *Endymion* at Carisbrooke seems perfectly clear, and that the day of his beginning was somewhere between the eighteenth and the twenty-third of April.

The letters from Margate tell the tale of the Carisbrooke weeks. "I went to the Isle of Wight," he says, in the letter of May tenth to Leigh Hunt, "thought so much about poetry, so long together, that I could not get to sleep at night . . . Another thing, I was too much in solitude, and consequently was obliged to be in a continual burning of thought, as an only resource."

At Margate, Tom's presence was a help, but Keats was in a fever of work and kept at it, and at it, until he forced himself into a real depression, almost a doubt of himself. "I have asked myself so often," he writes in this same letter to Hunt, "why I should be a poet more than other men, seeing how great a thing it is, — how great things are to be gained by it, what a thing to be in the mouth of Fame, — that at last the idea has grown so monstrously beyond my seeming power of attainment, that the other

day I nearly consented with myself to drop into a Phaeton. Yet 'tis a disgrace to fail, even in a huge attempt; and at this moment I drive the thought from me . . . Perhaps I may have done a good deal for the time, but it appears such a pin's point to me that I will not copy any out. When I consider that so many of these pin-points go to make a bodkin-point . . . and that it requires a thousand bodkins to make a spear bright enough to throw any light to posterity, I see nothing but continual up-hill journeying. Now is there anything more unpleasant . . . than to be so journeying and miss the goal at last? But I intend to whistle all these cogitations into the sea."

Keats's ingenious reason for not sending any of his poem to the man whose meddling, if kindly, finger he does not wish to see streaked across his new pie is very illuminating. At the end of the letter, Keats turns whimsical, as was his wont, and covers his feelings under a sort of rueful joke:

> "Does Shelley go on telling strange stories of the deaths of kings? Tell him there are strange stories of the deaths of poets. Some have died before they were conceived . . . Does Mrs. S. cut bread and butter as neatly as ever? Tell her to procure some fatal scissors, and cut the thread of life of all to-be-disappointed poets."

Then comes the bane of over-work, the true hell reserved for over-zealous artists. His work seems bad, all faults until — the great until! — he compares it with work of another kind, and takes heart again in the realization that at least his aim is all right. In the letter of May tenth to Haydon, he says:

> "I have been in such a state of Mind as to read over my Lines and hate them. I am one that 'gathers samphire, dreadful trade' [1] — the Cliff of Poesy towers above me — yet when Tom who meets with some of Pope's Homer in Plutarch's Lives reads some of those to me they seem like Mice [2] to mine. I read and write about eight hours a day."

[1] See Vol. I. p. 304. [2] *Ibid.*

Toward the end of his letter, he adds: "I never quite despair and I read Shakespeare — indeed I shall I think never read any other Book much . . . I am very near agreeing with Hazlitt that Shakespeare is enough for us." The letter finishes with a blessing perfectly adapted to his correspondent's taste: "So now in the name of Shakespeare, Raphael and all our Saints, I commend you to the care of heaven!"

A little incident which testifies to Keats's charm occurred on his departure from Carisbrooke. His landlady insisted on giving him the picture of Shakespeare which he liked so much. "I was there but a Week," he tells Haydon, "yet the old woman made me take it with me though I went off in a hurry. Do you not think this is ominous of good?"

I have already spoken of Keats's preoccupation with Shakespeare at this time. He was reading the plays over and over again evidently. In the letter to Reynolds from Carisbrooke, is a significant passage on the kind of way he was going over them. Not merely reading, but marking, learning, and inwardly digesting them to the smallest detail of poetry and meaning. This is what he says:

> "I'll tell you what — on the 23$^{d}$ was Shakespeare born. Now if I should receive a letter from you, and another from my Brothers on that day 'twould be a parlous good thing. Whenever you write say a word or two on some Passage in Shakespeare that may have come rather new to you, which must be continually happening. notwithstanding that we read the same Play forty times."

The gift of Shakespeare's picture is "ominous of good"; to receive a letter on Shakespeare's birthday "would be a parlous good thing"; now, in the May tenth letter to Haydon, he goes farther: "I remember your saying that you had notions of a good Genius presiding over you. I have of late had the same thought, for things which [I] do half at Random are afterwards confirmed by my judgement in

a dozen features of Propriety. Is it too daring to fancy Shakespeare this Presider?" Shakespeare, so dwelt upon and brooded over, takes on something of an oracular quality to Keats's heated imagination. What has he to say of Christianity, that already mooted subject to Keats? It is not to Haydon, naturally, that he dares suggest a pro and con, but to Leigh Hunt, whose views he finds interesting, although he is not quite able to accept them for himself. The Margate letter to Leigh Hunt contains the following:

> "I ought to have said a word on Shakespeare's Christianity. There are two which I have not looked over with you, touching the thing: the one for, the other against: that in favour is in *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Scene 2,
>
> *Isab.* Alas, alas!
> Why all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
> And he that might the 'vantage best have took,
> Found out the remedy.
>
> That against is in *Twelfth Night*, Act III, Scene 2,
>
> *Maria.* For there is no Christian that means to be saved by believing rightly, can ever believe such impossible passages of grossness."

Keats ends the subject with this quotation. He leaves it, in fact, unsolved. Indeed, I suspect that the subject was still in solution in his mind at this time. He seems still to believe in Deity, but to have reached the point of questioning Christianity.

Keats's letter to Haydon seems to be a reply to one from Haydon to him, misdated in Haydon's journal as of May eleventh. Haydon has heard of Keats's depression from his letters to his brothers, and he writes to cheer him up, characteristically exhorting him to "Trust in God with all your might, my dear Keats," and again referring to the consolation of prayer. In his answer, Keats ignores this suggestion of Haydon's explicitly, but in a totally different connection does speak of "our Creator."

Haydon, having succeeded in removing Keats from Hunt — geographically, at least — cannot resist reinforcing his action in this wise:

> "Beware, for God's sake, of the delusions and sophistications that are ripping up the talents and morality of our friend! He will go out of the world the victim of his own weakness and the dupe of his own self-delusions, with the contempt of his enemies and the sorrow of his friends, and the cause he undertook to support injured by his own neglect of character."

This is pretty stiff speaking, but Haydon knew that his leaven was working. Keats has listened and is beginning to acquiesce with Haydon's views. To this remark of Haydon's he replies:

> "I wrote to Hunt yesterday — scarcely know what I said in it. I could not talk about Poetry in the way I should have liked for I was not in humour with either his or mine. His self delusions are very lamentable — they have enticed him into a Situation which I should be less eager after than that of a galley Slave — what you observe thereon is very true must be in time.
>
> Perhaps it is a self delusion to say so — but I think I could not be deceived in the manner that Hunt is — may I die to-morrow if I am to be. There is no greater Sin after the seven deadly than to flatter oneself into an idea of being a great Poet . . . how comfortable a feel it is to feel that such a Crime must bring its heavy Penalty? That if one be a Self-deluder accounts must be balanced?"

Poor Hunt! No longer will ropes of roses suffice to lead his pet lamb whither he will. He is no more the headmaster, glorious and invincible chief; he is a man replete of faults and foibles even as other men, and so Keats never afterwards fails to consider him.

While this psychological drama was going on at Margate, Keats's affairs in London were moving at an unfortunately rapid rate. George Keats, whether by John's authority or on his own initiative we do not know, had un-

dertaken to express his views to the Olliers regarding their management of the sale of the *Poems*. The answer vouchsafed him was not one calculated to soothe rasped nerves. Under the date of "29th April, 1817," the publishers wrote:

> "Sir, —
>
> We regret that your brother ever requested us to publish his book, or that our opinion of its talent should have led us to acquiesce in undertaking it. We are, however, much obliged to you for relieving us from the unpleasant necessity of declining any further connection with it, which we must have done, as we think the curiosity is satisfied, and the sale has dropped. By far the greater number of persons who have purchased it from us have found fault with it in such plain terms, that we have in many cases offered to take the book back rather than be annoyed with the ridicule which has, time after time, been showered upon it. In fact, it was only on Saturday last that we were under the mortification of having our own opinion of its merits flatly contradicted by a gentleman, who told us he considered it 'no better than a take in.' These are unpleasant imputations for any one in business to labour under, but we should have borne them and concealed their existance from you had not the style of your note shewn us that such delicacy would be quite thrown away. We shall take means without delay for ascertaining the number of copies on hand, and you shall be informed accordingly.
>
> Yours most &c.
>
> C. & J. Ollier."

That is a nasty letter. What can George have said to call down such sheer abuse? I fear that this is another instance of George's "pride." Whatever it was, there was a flat end to the Olliers. Probably it was James, the business brother, who wrote the letter, for Keats seems to have remained on pleasant terms with the verse-dabbling Charles to the end of the chapter. What became of the unsold remainder of the first edition, I have not been able certainly to discover. From this letter, it would look as if

George had intimated that he was prepared to take it over. But did he? The Olliers continued to publish Hunt and Shelley, but, as this firm did not advertise its publications in the back of its books, I cannot check the *Poems*, 1817, in either Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* or Hunt's *Foliage*, both of which volumes were issued in 1818, where such an advertisement would naturally appear. Taylor and Hessey did print such lists in the back of their volumes, and I have consulted a number of them. *Endymion* appears, and so, in 1820 and after, does *Lamia*, but not the *Poems*. Taylor and Hessey seem to have taken Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* over from the Olliers, and an advertisement of it is duly printed in the back of the *Lectures on the Comic Writers*. It certainly looks, therefore, as though the *Poems* were not taken over; on the other hand, there are occasional references in Woodhouse's letters which lead to the inference that they sometimes sold them.[1] Could the Keats brothers command a sum sufficient to buy out the edition? It does not seem likely, and what would Abbey have said at being asked for money for such a purpose. We must leave the question unanswered, I fear. One little hint there is that George had contemplated buying the books, possibly because of some sort of an assurance that Taylor and Hessey would handle them in the way of retail business. This hint is in the shape of a word to John that the money from their grandfather's main estate could not be touched because of the dragging Chancery suit.[2] At least we can infer that this was the gist of George's communication to John, mentioned in the letter to Haydon. The mention is a little ambiguous as to the exact facts, probably because Haydon knew all about them. In the second half of the letter, written on May eleventh, Keats says:

"This Morning I received a letter from George by which

[1] Since writing the above, I have found an advertisement of the *Poems* in the back of Clare's *Village Minstrel*, published by Taylor and Hessey in 1821.

[2] See Vol. I, p. 27.

it appears that Money Troubles are to follow us up for some time to come — perhaps for always — these vexations are a great hindrance to one — they are not like Envy and detraction stimulants to further exertion as being immediately relative and reflected on at the same time with the prime object — but rather like a nettle leaf or two in your bed. So now I revoke my Promise of finishing my Poem by the Autumn which I should have done had I gone on as I have done — but I cannot write while my spirit is fevered in a contrary direction and I am now sure of having plenty of it this Summer. At this moment I am in no enviable Situation — I feel that I am not in a Mood to write any to-day; and it appears that the loss of it is the beginning of all sorts of irregularities. I am extremely glad that a time must come when every thing will leave not a wrack behind. You tell me never to despair — I wish it was as easy for me to observe the saying — truth is I have a horrid Morbidity of Temperament which has shown itself at intervals — it is I have no doubt the greatest Enemy and stumbling block I have to fear — I may even say that it is likely to be the cause of my disappointment."

Keats was certainly in a disagreeable position. Not only did *Endymion* tease to be written because it must, there was still another complication to trouble him. He had contracted for the poem with a new firm of publishers, and the poem would not get itself written. It was awkward. Not that Messrs. Taylor and Hessey urged him, they seem to have been perfectly comprehending and sympathetic, and never to have dreamt of hurrying him, but his own conscience hurried him. He was the author of a most unsuccessful book of poems, the unsaleable copies of which the publishers were most anxious to throw back on his hands, and yet he had found another firm who were willing to venture on a new poem by him, and a long one at that. And he was under still greater obligations to this extraordinary pair of partners. By the terms of his agreement with them, he was to receive an advance payment of

twenty pounds.[1] This money, probably at George's solicitation, they sent to him at Margate. We can imagine George arriving at 93 Fleet Street with the dismal news that, far from being able to buy back his books, John was in actual need of money. It seems likely that this was the way of it, for, if John had written, doubtless his letter would have been preserved along with the others. His acknowledgement, written on May sixteenth, we have.

Keats's letter to Taylor and Hessey shows that already he was on the most friendly terms with them. After a somewhat pathetic attempt at playful joking, he adds, with characteristic frankness:

> "I went day by day at my poem for a Month — at the end of which time the other day I found my Brain so overwrought that I had neither rhyme nor reason in it — so was obliged to give up for a few days. I hope soon to be able to resume my work — I have endeavoured to do so once or twice; but to no purpose. Instead of Poetry, I have a swimming in my head and feel all the effects of a Mental debauch, lowness of Spirits, anxiety to go on without the power to do so, which does not at all tend to my ultimate progression."

Keats calls Margate a "treeless affair," and perhaps the sea had woven itself too closely into his depression. It was not like the Summer before, when he had hankered after just the scenery which was to be found at Margate. His mood is utterly different now from what it was a year earlier, and Margate does not suit it. He wants — trees. Already, by May tenth, he had told Hunt: "I fancied that I should like my old lodging here, and could contrive to do without trees . . . Tom is with me at present, and we are very comfortable. We intend, though, to get among some trees." As a postscript, he adds: "You shall hear where we move." Six days later, he has decided where to go. He tells Taylor and Hessey: "This evening I go to

[1] Colvin. From information supplied by a great-niece of Taylor's.

Canterbury, having got tired of Margate. I was not right in my head when I came. At Canterbury I hope the remembrance of Chaucer will set me forward like a Billiard Ball."

On Friday, May sixteenth, then, Keats left Margate, seeking, as so many poets have done, an atmosphere which will put him into the frame of mind necessary for his work. The portmanteaux are hoisted in, the cloths are pulled off the horses, the whip cracks, the horn blows, and John and Tom Keats, and some hundreds of lines of *Endymion*, rattle away to Canterbury.

I have been in something of a quandary as to just how to deal with *Endymion* in the matter of time. It took Keats seven months to write the poem, and during those months he was moving from place to place, and his mind was in a constant flux and flow. To weave the poem in with his daily existence, as I have been trying to do with his poems hitherto, was manifestly impossible, if any continuity in the poem itself were to be preserved. It has seemed to me best, therefore, to abandon the strict chronological sequence in this instance, and devote a chapter to *Endymion* alone. Of course, in doing this, I have been obliged to make such reference to events, and to Keats's continual growth of thought, as have to do with the poem, reserving, however, the narrative proper for a succeeding chapter. How much Keats had written by the time he left Margate, we do not know. But it is clear that he had advanced a good way with the First Book. His life and mental experiences in Carisbrooke and in Margate are so much of a piece that no break could well be made between them. Now, however, we come to a pause, a pause because we have no letters to fill a gap of a month. That Keats wrote no letters for a month, it is impossible to conceive, but it is a fact that none have come to light. Here, then, seems the logical place to take up the long, and very difficult, poem which is *Endymion*.

## CHAPTER V

### *ENDYMION*

It is not hard to understand why Keats chose the story of Endymion for the subject of his contemplated long poem. Possible subjects for long poems fall roughly into five groups. These groups we may classify as mythological, historical, satirical, allegorical, and narrative pure and simple. If modern poetry were in question, another group might be added, the psychological, but psychology was unknown to science until very recently, and, however much psychology there was in the poetry of an earlier day, it worked under the cover of narrative or drama. Purely psychological poems such as Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Avon's Harvest* or *Roman Bartholow*, for instance, are a product of modern scientific thought. Taking these five groups one by one, we shall quickly see upon which Keats's choice was predestined to fall.

Historical poetry requires much knowledge and considerable research, and Keats, at this period, had neither the knowledge nor the patience necessary to hunt facts and laboriously combine them into an artistic whole. His reading had always been of the impressionistic order; to receive impressions, not to tabulate facts, was his aim, and it is the wisest aim for a budding poet. Not until the poetical view-point is so firmly fixed as to become a dependable habit, can youth engage in a long, conscious preparation of detail before starting to write. It may sound paradoxical, but it is a truth that Keats had to write, it would have been an ill-judged move on his part to have held off from actual writing for any preparation whatsoever. Time for that later on. We see, therefore, that a subject taken from history was out of the question.

For satire, a poet needs experience, experience of events

and persons. He also needs the possession of a certain state of mind. Keats's experience was of the slightest, and his state of mind was as far removed from the satirical as could well be. Satire is not a lover's tool, and Keats was fairly in love with poetry. Beauty and poetry were synonymous to him; it took years, and the flint of disappointment, to strike the spark of satire in his soul.

As to allegory, that was completely foreign to Keats's nature. There is no trace of allegory to be found anywhere in his works. The ingenious efforts of commentators to find allegorical meanings in *Endymion* and *Hyperion* have led to a great deal of interesting writing; but these tracts, as I may call them, are quite beside the mark, since they are invariably based upon the supposition that Keats was a type of man which any intimate study of his character proves that he was not. In the following analysis of *Endymion*, I have endeavoured to show how Keats really wrote the poem, basing my explanations entirely on his own statements and upon the known facts of his life and personality.

In speaking of narrative as a category by itself, I mean that kind of tale in verse which is concerned with men and women such as the poet may possibly have encountered in the flesh. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* comes under this heading, and so do many of Wordsworth's poems. Crabbe is an uninspired exemplar of the *genre*, as, in our own day, but with the quality of poetry added, are John Masefield and Robert Frost. One would suppose that Keats, while visiting Dr. Hammond's patients in Edmonton, or walking the London hospitals, must have come across scores of people whose lives would have given him abundance of material for just this sort of thing. The material may have lain before him as thick as hoar-frost on an Autumn morning, but it was not in him to react to it. Poetry, to Keats, was a thing of zest and glamour. Realist though he was, his realism confined itself to detail; it was

realism vitalizing romance, for Keats is one of the great romantics of literature. His dislike of Wordsworth's rural episodes was absolute and irrevocable. In a review of Reynolds's skit on *Peter Bell*, published in the *Examiner* in 1819, Keats says of the then anonymous author: "The more he may love the sad embroidery of the *Excursion*, the more he will hate the coarse samplers of Betty Foy and Alice Fell." Nobody can dislike Chaucer, but it was the great, sincere, straightforward and penetrating poet whom Keats admired, rather than the teller of tales. It is significant that the one poem of Chaucer's on which he was moved to compose was the apocryphal *Floure and the Lefe*. Besides, the centuries had invested Chaucer's everyday characters with a romantic aura.

Counting out the four groups of history, satire, allegory, and domestic narrative, we see that the only one of our five divisions which Keats could cope with in the Spring of 1817 was the mythological. Mythology had captivated him even in his school-days. There was Lemprière, which Clarke thinks he knew almost by heart. He was familiar with Sandys' translation of Ovid from the same early period, and the Elizabethan poets he had delved into were full of mythological allusions and suggestions. Since mythology was the only possible source from which he was fitted to draw inspiration for the poem he wished to write, the choice of the legend of Endymion was a foregone conclusion. I have already spoken of his peculiar and transcendental feeling for the moon. Realizing this, it is evident that the Endymion myth must have a peculiar attraction for him, and that he would undoubtedly attempt to write it as soon as he felt able to do so. It is also obvious that the Endymion drama was capable of becoming the expression of just those ideas which he had, somewhat haltingly, tried to express in *I Stood Tip-toe* and *Sleep and Poetry*. His little essay of it in the first of these two poems points clearly to his direction.

There are many books in which Keats may have read the legend. It is told, or referred to, in Spenser's *Epithalamium*, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Ben Jonson's *Masque of Oberon*, Marlowe's *Ovid's Love Elegies*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and the *Maid's Tragedy*. But, in all this goodly array, there was only one Elizabethan poet who let his fancy really play over the subject, and that was Michael Drayton. Drayton wrote two long poems dealing with the myth of Endymion and Diana. These poems are *Endimion and Phœbe* and the *Man in the Moone*.

Sir Sidney Colvin is as convinced as everybody else that Keats, in constructing his plot, was much indebted to the *Man in the Moone*, which was included in Smethwick's edition of Drayton; but he is also stoutly convinced that, in spite of the far closer parallels between Keats's *Endymion* and Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe*, Keats could never have seen that work. This interesting question did not seem to me solved by a mere statement of impossibility, and I set out to find what reasons for and against could be discovered. The result of my search has been to convince me, in my turn, that Keats could, without difficulty, have seen the poem, and that, taking into consideration the many passages in *Endymion* which almost duplicate passages in *Endimion and Phœbe*, he certainly did see it, and, in fact, took one of the most important episodes in his poem directly from it.

Before considering the important questions of where and how Keats could have met with Drayton's little known work, *Endimion and Phœbe*, I wish to point out the evidence in the two poems which makes it conclusive that one is derived from the other. Even Sir Sidney does not deny this evidence, but he considers it due to coincidence, an opinion which becomes untenable when the impossibility of Keats's ever having seen Drayton's poem is explained away.

Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe* is so scarce a book that only two copies are known to exist to-day. It has been my good fortune to trace the present whereabouts of both these copies, and to find out enough of the history of one of them to disprove Sir Sidney's contention. Drayton published the book in 1594, and he never reprinted it. Why, no one knows, but such is the case. One may, however, conceive the reason to have been pique. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* had appeared in 1593, and already, in 1594, it had attained to a second edition, and a third was called for in 1596. Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* was being widely and successfully circulated in manuscript. *Endimion and Phœbe* fell upon indifferent ears. For some reason, it was not fancied, and Drayton, in view of his comparative failure in a style of work so pleasantly received from the pens of Shakespeare and Marlowe, not improbably determined that his poem should disappear; and disappear it did, from the knowledge of scholars, at least, for two hundred and sixty years. There is an almost exact parallel here to the case of the Dutch painter, Vermeer, with this difference: Vermeer's pictures were known and attributed to various other painters, but his existence was entirely forgotten; Drayton was well known, but this particular poem was not only lost, all knowledge that he had ever written such a poem was lost with it. To be sure, eighteen extracts from the poem were printed in *England's Parnassus* in 1600, but, as the name of the poem from which they came was not mentioned, these quotations could not serve any purpose of identification.

To realize how greatly Keats drew on Drayton's poem, it is necessary to compare various passages from it with corresponding passages in *Endymion*. There are two modern reprints of *Endimion and Phœbe*, dating from a period more than thirty years subsequent to Keats's death. These reprints were privately issued for the Roxburgh Club of London, but since both are long out of

print and difficult to obtain, I shall give these passages in full. Let me say at the start that, although I have worked with the originals before me, my task has been greatly facilitated by reference to an unpublished manuscript in the Widener Library, which the author, Mr. Claude L. Finney, has kindly given me his permission to make use of.[1]

Before starting on the comparisons, there is one stumbling block which must be cleared up. In the first edition of *Endymion*, the lines are carefully numbered, but this numbering is entirely out of accordance with proper metrical usage. The poem is written in heroic couplets — that is, the lines are iambic pentameter with each pair rhyming, rarely there are three rhymes in succession. Whenever Keats wished to make a division in his poem, he dropped his next line down one space, and when these divisions happened to occur in the middle of a line, he followed the same procedure with that part of the line belonging to the new section. The line, however, being always of five feet, was not metrically altered by this form of printing, but Keats, or his publishers, in defiance of both logic and strict metrical custom, counted every divided line as two. Buxton Forman, very naturally, preferred to adhere to precedent and consider these sundered lines as undivided, reading as one line what Keats read as two, and in this he has been followed by Professor de Sélincourt. The result is, obviously, extremely confusing, for it means that Keats's numbering and this later numbering become more and more at variance throughout each book of the poem. Plainly, then, when Keats, in his letters, mentions a line by its number, only those happy possessors of the first edition can know which line he means without the necessity of carefully re-counting all the lines by his method from

[1] *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney. "A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in the Division of Modern Languages of Harvard University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. April, 1922."

the beginning of the particular book in which the line stands. Since first editions are scarcely plentiful, I have been forced, for the convenience of readers, to adopt Buxton Forman's plan. Whenever, in allusions to statements in the letters, I have been obliged to use Keats's numbering, I have said so in the text. Unless otherwise stated, therefore, the line numbers throughout this chapter correspond to those in Buxton Forman's and Professor de Sélincourt's editions.

The verbal correspondences between *Endimion and Phœbe* and *Endymion* begin with the sixty-fourth line of *Endymion* and the twenty-second of Drayton's poem. The openings of the two poems are quite unlike. *Endimion and Phœbe* opens directly by telling the reader that on Mount Latmus, the favourite resort of all the sylvan deities, but especially dedicated to the vestal rites of Diana, there lives a young shepherd named Endimion. At this point, Drayton describes the mountain as follows:

> "Vpon this Mount there stood a stately Groue
> Whose reaching armes to clip the Welkin stroue,
> Of tufted Cedars, and the branching Pine,
> Whose bushy tops themselues doe so intwine,
> As seem'd when Nature first this work begun
> She then conspir'd against the piercing sun:
> Vnder whose couert."

Keats's description in *Endymion* is extraordinarily like Drayton's:

> "Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
> A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed
> So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
> Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.
> And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
> Where no man went; . . .
> . . . . .
> . . . . Who could tell
> The freshness of the space of heaven above,
> Edg'd round with dark tree tops?"

Continuing the description, Drayton goes on:

> "Out of thys soyle sweet bubling Fountains crept,
> As though for ioy the sencelesse stones had wept,
> With straying channels dauncing sundry wayes,
> . . . . .
> Which breaking forth the tender grasse bedewed."

This picture is condensed in *Endymion* to:

> ". . . Cold Springs had run
> To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass."

On the banks of these streams, says Drayton, grow many sorts of flowers; and nightingales, ousels, and blackbirds sing. Marble steps lead up to the grove at the top of the mountain, and here Phœbe, in the form of a nymph arrayed in an "Azur'd Mantle," discovers herself to Endimion as he is fishing by a river-side. This "Azur'd Mantle" is one of the parallels between *Endimion and Phœbe* and *Endymion*. And here let me say that Keats's verbal correspondences with Drayton's poem by no means follow in Drayton's order. They skip about here and there wherever Keats found them of use. That I may not duplicate my quotations, however, I give them where they fall in this outline of the plot of Drayton's *Endimion*. The mantle is given in Drayton thus:

> "An Azur'd Mantle purfled with a vaile,
> Which in the Ayre puft like a swelling saile,
> Embosted Rayne-bowes did appeare in silk,
> With wauie streames as white as mornings Milk;
> Which euer as the gentle Ayre did blow,
> Still with the motion seem'd to ebb and flow."

When Keats's Endymion first sees his goddess, this same blowing blue mantle forms part of his vision:

> ". . . The wind out-blows
> Her scarf into a fluttering pavillion;
> 'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million

Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies."

Later, in the *Man in the Moone*, into which Drayton rewrote some of the passages of *Endimion and Phœbe*, this mantle passage is altered and greatly enlarged, an enlargement which Keats paraphrases in his account of Glaucus's cloak in Book III. But, in the *Man in the Moone*, the mantle is not specifically blue, on the contrary, it is described as being "of sundry Colours"; also, the *Man in the Moone* mantle is not spangled. In Diana's scarf, Keats carefully preserves both the blue and the spangles; even when he comes to Glaucus's cloak, he makes it blue.

To continue with Drayton's plot, when Phœbe comes upon Endimion fishing, she at once enters into conversation with him and proceeds to make love forthwith. But Endimion is unmoved, stating that he is the sworn servant of Diana and vowed to chastity. Phœbe persisting, he threatens her with Diana's wrath should that goddess observe them, telling the supposed nymph that "Diana came that way" upon occasion. The wooing continues, and Endimion remains obdurate until Phœbe has gone, when he would fain recall her, having fallen in love during the parley. Night comes on. Endimion sits on a moonlit bank, longing for the vanished nymph. This scene, in Drayton's words, is as follows:

"Now fast by Latmus neere vnto a Groue,
Which by the mount was shadowed from aboue,
Vpon a banck Endimion sat by night,
To whom fayre Phœbe lent her frendly light;
And sith his flocks were layd them downe to rest,
Thus giues his sorrowes passage from his brest.

. . . . .

And lifting now his sad and heauy eyes
Vp towards the beauty of the burnisht skies,
Bright Lamps (qd.he) the glorious Welkin bears,

Which clip about the Plannets wandring Sphears,
And in your circled Maze doe euer role,
Dauncing about the neuer-moouing Pole:

[Here follows a prayer to the constellations and planets to shed their beneficent influences]

Vpon Endimion pyning thus in loue."

At dawn, Phœbe, being, as it were, off duty, descends once more to earth. The moon is no longer in the sky,

"But her sweet Latmus, which she lou'd so much,
No sooner once her dainty foote doth touch,
But that the Mountaine with her brightnes shone,
And gaue a light to all the Horizon:
Euen as the Sun, which darknes long did shroud,
Breakes suddainly from vnderneath a clowd."

These two passages together evidently suggested to Keats his far more beautiful lines:

"... Methought I lay
Watching the zenith, where the milky way
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours;
And travelling my eye, until the doors
Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,
I became loth and fearful to alight
From such high soaring by a downward glance:
So kept me steadfast in that airy trance,
Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
When, presently, the stars began to glide,
And faint away, before my eager view:
At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,
And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge;
And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge
The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er
A shell for Neptune's goblet: she did soar
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
Commingling with her argent spheres did roll
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
At last into a dark and vapoury tent —

Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train
Of planets all were in the blue again."

In this correspondence, the parallel is one of idea rather than of words. In each case, Endymion is lying on the grass, gazing at the stars. In each, the brilliance of the stars is remarked. Phœbe's shining when she steps on earth at dawn, in Drayton's poem, is duplicated in Keats's by her appearance at the horizon's edge. In both, the horizon is mentioned. In Drayton, darkness shrouds the sun; in Keats, the moon goes into a dark and vapoury tent. In Drayton, the sun breaks suddenly through a cloud; in Keats, the outshone planets appear once more twinkling brightly in the sky.

Again to return to Drayton's story: Phœbe finds Endimion asleep, which reminds us of Book II of *Endymion* where Diana finds Endymion, if not actually asleep, at least preparing to fall asleep and dream. But the subsequent proceedings are not immediately the same. Drayton recounts how Phœbe calls her nymphs, who hang garlands about Endimion, anoint his body, and after kissing him solemnly one after the other withdraw and leave him alone with the goddess. Phœbe, having prepared him for the sight of her divine self, undisguised, by infusing into his soul "the fiery nature of the heauently Muse," wakes him up. At first he is overcome by her dazzling presence. Yet he still thinks of her only as a nymph, not yet knowing her for the goddess. Presently he finds courage to make love to her. This episode is duplicated in the Fourth Book of *Endymion*, where Endymion makes love to the Indian Maiden; but there is also a close parallel of idea here, which Keats employs in quite a different place. The passage in Drayton is this:

"Be kind (quoth he) sweet Nymph, vnto thy louer,
My soules sole essence, and my senses mouer,
Life of my life, pure Image of my hart,

Impressure of Conceit, Inuention, Art!
My vitall spirit receues his spirit from thee,
Thou art that all which ruleth all in me:
Thou art the sap and life whereby I liue,
Which powerfull vigor doost receiue and giue;
Thou nourishest the flame wherein I burne,
The North whereto my harts true tuch doth turne."

In Book III of *Endymion*, Keats, without exactly copying a single metaphor, perfectly reproduces Drayton's conception:

"And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend
With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen;
Thou wast the mountain-top — the sage's pen —
The poet's harp — the voice of friends — the sun;
Thou wast the river — thou wast glory won;
Thou wast my clarion's blast — thou wast my steed —
My goblet full of wine — my topmost deed: —
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!
O what a wild and harmonized tune
My spirit struck from all the beautiful!"

The love passage which follows Drayton's apostrophic lines is more keenly visualized in Book II of *Endymion* than it is in *Endimion and Phœbe*, but the content is the same.

Here I must go back a little to Phœbe's dawn descent to earth, for Drayton relates that the gods and goddesses of Olympus, horrified at this proceeding, consider what they can do to restrain her, and come to the conclusion that, as she is mistress of tides and circumstances, they can do nothing. This episode is much amplified in the *Man in the Moone*, and it is the *Man in the Moone* version which seems to have influenced Keats most.

Following upon the love scene in *Endimion and Phœbe*, the goddess reveals herself to Endimion. Having told him that she is, in truth, Diana, she clothes herself in all the glory of her celestial light and, wrapping Endimion in a

fiery mantle, carries him up to the skies. Drayton describes how Phœbe bears Endimion through the "starry firmament" and shows him the "Twynns" the "heauenly archers," the "Lion," the "Bear," the "tear-distilling mournful Pliades," and other members of the zodiac. There are two flights in Keats's *Endymion*; one in Book I, the other in Book IV. Drayton duplicates the flight in his first poem in his second, the *Man in the Moone*, where Keats, of course, read it; but, although Drayton's flights have a distinct resemblance, it is important to note that details in the *Endimion and Phœbe* version do not reappear in the *Man in the Moone*, while these same details are reproduced by Keats. A very slight and unimportant one is the "starry firmament," which, in *Endymion*, becomes the more pictorial "Where falling stars dart their artillery forth." This is in the First Book. The second flight, in the Fourth Book, contains a much closer and more important parallel. In this second flight, Endymion falls asleep and so fails to hear a "pinioned multitude" who sweep by him singing the pre-nuptial song of Diana. In this song, the signs of the zodiac, the Lion, the Bear, Castor and Pollux (Drayton's "heauenly archers"), and the Centaur, are mentioned.

Having by this airy journey "impt the wings of his desire," Phœbe returns Endimion to earth and vanishes. From this moment, fortune and the Muses attend upon Endimion; his flocks prosper; bees bring him honey; when he would hunt, the nymphs bear him company.

As the time approaches when Phœbe intends to honour Endimion, she sends Mercury to summon the sylvan deities to the solemn celebration which she has obtained Phœbus's consent to hold. They come: Fauns, Satyrs, Oreads, Dryads, Hamadryads, even the Naiads "vpon Sea-horses." The gist of this passage is repeated in the song of the "multitude" in Book IV of *Endymion*, where the lesser gods, goddesses, sylvan deities, and constel-

lations, all gather for "Dian's feast" on "her marriage night." In *Endymion*, the actual solemnity is supposed to take place after the close of the poem. Keats leaves Endymion and Diana flying to the heavens to be ready for it. Drayton has devised a different ending. In *Endimion and Phœbe*, Phœbe arrives in a "Christall Coach" in the pomp of all her titles, and wafts Endimion to the top of Mount Latmus. On reaching this, her favourite spot on earth, she lays him "vnder a bushie Lawrell's pleasing shade," where she may easily descend to sport with him daily. Here, for thirty years, Endimion rests, "Remayning ever beautiful and yong." The poem ends with a sort of epilogue, addressed particularly to Spenser and Lodge, in which Drayton invokes the protection of these poets for his poem.

The most important point in which Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe* influenced Keats is the device by which Diana, in the guise of a nymph, steals Endimion's love from her true self, the goddess. This is a striking episode, so striking, and so absolutely without parallel in all the other versions of the legend, whether of classic original or Elizabethan follower, that it is most improbable that Keats reinvented it. Such a coincidence would be so remarkable that it is almost out of the bounds of possibility. Keats could not have found it in the *Man in the Moone* for nothing of the sort occurs there. If there were no other resemblance between Drayton's and Keats's poems, this alone would be sufficient evidence that Keats had read *Endimion and Phœbe*. But there are other evidences, as we have seen. The complete table of Keats's indebtedness to *Endimion and Phœbe*, I paraphrase from Mr. Finney's excellent summary.[1] It is as follows:

1. The invention of Phœbe's assuming the guise of a nymph, and the result of her so doing. Although this is paralleled

[1] *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney.

in various places throughout *Endymion*, the chief of these parallels is the episode of the Indian maiden in Book IV.

2. Certain details in the description of Mount Latmus.
3. Endimion lying on the grass and gazing at the starry sky while he pines for his vanished lady, who, in both poems, is the goddess, supposed by him to be a nymph.
4. Endimion's expression of the influence which the moon has upon him.
5. Details and colour of Phœbe's mantle used by Keats in description of Diana's scarf, colour re-employed in Glaucus's cloak.
6. Certain details of Endimion's flight in the air, particularly the mention of the signs of the zodiac.
7. The marriage gathering at the end, to which come the lesser and sylvan deities.

These particular points are none of them duplicated in Drayton's second attempt at the subject, the *Man in the Moone*.

Since the *Man in the Moone* is perfectly accessible to inquiring readers, I shall do little more in referring to it than state those places where Keats evidently borrowed from it. That Keats knew the poem well, there is no doubt. At the time of his death, he owned a copy of John Smethwick's edition of Drayton's Poems. Of course this by no means proves that the book was in his possession in 1817, but both the 1619 and the 1636 editions of Smethwick's collection were obtainable. Any of his friends might have had a copy, or he could have read it at the British Museum, to the reading room of which we know that Haydon, at some time, procured him a ticket.

Both the *Man in the Moone* and *Endymion* begin with the yearly festival to Pan. In both, the shining of the moon serves as introduction to the story of Endymion; but in the *Man in the Moone* a shepherd, Roland, relates the tale, while in *Endymion* it is the theme of the poem itself and not a story told by one of the characters. On this account, the festival of Pan, which, in the *Man in the*

*Moone*, is merely an introductory setting, is, in *Endymion*, the first scene of the main action of the poem. In this we see that Drayton diverged from the direct relation of his earlier poem, while Keats kept to it.

In the *Man in the Moone*, Roland tells how Endimion

> "... vs'd to ly,
> All the long night contemplating the sky
> At her hie beauties."

This is a paraphrase of the more vivid description of Endimion's sky-gazing and longing for the nymph in *Endimion and Phœbe*, but here Endimion is and knows he is, in love with Diana; there is no assumption of any disguise in the *Man in the Moone*, as there is in the earlier poem and in *Endymion*. Keats, as we have seen, followed Drayton's first version in the details of the grass and the stars, but the expression "her hie beauties" very likely suggested "the loveliest moon," and all that goes with it, in *Endymion*. Again, in his original rewriting of the legend, Drayton makes the gods and goddesses much shocked at Phœbe's behaviour, but in the later poem he adds a little humour to the episode by having her descend to earth, not only by day, but by night:

> "That oft her want vnto the world was strange,
> Fearing that heauen the wõted course wold change
> And Phœbus her oft missing did inquire,
> If that elsewhere she borrowed other fire."

It is certainly this more distinctly human passage which suggested Keats's lines in Book II, where Venus tells Endymion that she has heard that he loved

> "Some fair immortal, and that his embrace
> Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace
> Of this in heaven: I have mark'd each cheek,
> And find it is the vainest thing to seek;
> And that of all things 'tis kept secretest."

Another passage in the *Man in the Moone* tells how, when Endimion fell in love with the goddess, he forsook

"All the delights which shepheards doe prefer,"

and pursued Phœbe to "the groues and springs." This Keats follows in making Endymion neglect his duties and sports, and wander mournfully through the woods seeking to recapture his vision.

Phœbe comes first to Endimion in a totally different manner in the *Man in the Moone* from the way she comes in *Endimion and Phœbe* or in *Endymion*. In the *Man in the Moone*, she appears riding upon a bull. Her mantle is again mentioned; but, as I have already pointed out, it is not blue. The description in this new version is infinitely more detailed, so detailed, in fact, that the account of it takes up seventy-six lines of the poem. This description Keats borrows for Glaucus's cloak, in the Third Book of *Endymion*, but condenses it from seventy-six lines to seventeen.

Again there is a flight, and this sky journey is a good deal like that in *Endimion and Phœbe*, but it lacks the signs of the zodiac. However, the later poem is undoubtedly responsible for Endymion's wanderings in the woods, the sea, and in the air, for to these Phœbe flies with Endimion. Endymion's earth journey seems to have been Keats's own invention, for I cannot agree with Mr. Finney that "since Phœbe was supposed to have power in heaven, earth and hell, what was more natural than that Keats should send Endymion in pursuit of her through those regions that she ruled?" [1] There is nothing in the least suggestive of Hell in Endymion's earth rambles, and I believe them to have been merely a natural corollary when sea, woods, and mountains had been suggested to him.

The end of the *Man in the Moone* is not at all

[1] *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney.

poetical. There is no such beautiful apotheosis for Endimion as in *Endimion and Phœbe*. No imaginative possibilities are opened to the reader as in *Endymion*. The *Man in the Moone* ends in a complete and rather base realism. Nothing could be more unlike the whole feeling of the close of *Endymion* than the finish of the *Man in the Moone*. Yet, with all its unlikeness, there is the parallel of antithesis here, for Drayton's last two lines are as follows:

> "The early Larke soon summoned the Day,
> When they departed every one their way."

while *Endymion* ends in this wise:

> "... Peona went
> Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment."

From this brief analysis, we cannot fail to see that, although Keats evidently took some few particulars for his poem from the *Man in the Moone*, he was far more deeply influenced by *Endimion and Phœbe*. What he got from the *Man in the Moone* is as a raindrop to an ocean compared with what he got from *Endimion and Phœbe*. It behooves us, then, to look closely into the subject of where and how he could have come across this extraordinarily rare volume.

Some time prior to 1837, Payne Collier, critic, bibliophile, and Shakespearian forger, stumbled upon a copy of the unique edition of Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe*. Where he met with it, he was very careful not to say; presumably he picked it up on some bookstall, for he stated quite clearly that he "procured it." His first mention of it was in his catalogue of the Bridgewater Library, where he described it as the only copy known. This copy lacked the title and the succeeding leaf, or, in bibliographical language, leaves A2 and A3. Afterwards, Collier discovered another, perfect, copy, the whereabouts of which his love of mystery counselled him to conceal. When, in 1856, he

edited a new collection of Drayton's poems as one of a series of privately printed volumes issued for the members of the Roxburgh Club, he included *Endimion and Phœbe*, saying of it: "Only two copies of 'Endimion and Phœbe' have been brought to light, one formerly the property of Camden, and the other in the hands of the editor of the present volume." In a reprint of his collection, made some years later, he confused the issue to the best of his ability by announcing that "the perfect copy is also in a private collection." By the expression, "a private collection," we may charitably suppose that Collier considered all collections not owned by the British Government to be private, for private in any other sense the collection which contained the only perfect copy of *Endimion and Phœbe* certainly was not.

Now what was there for a seeker to go upon? Merely the facts that Collier had owned an imperfect copy of the book, and that a perfect copy existed which had once been Camden's. Having discovered so much, I wrote to Mr. George Watson Cole, librarian of the Henry E. Huntington Library, to ask if any other exemplars of the book were known. Mr. Cole was so good as to direct his assistant, Mr. Cecil K. Edmonds, to look into the matter, and tell me what he could discover. Mr. Edmonds's information, scanty though it perforce had to be, set me on the right track, for, among other things, he suggested that I inquire of Mr. W. A. White of Brooklyn, who was the owner of an imperfect copy, which might, or might not, have been Collier's.

Mr. White is always kindness itself to collectors and scholars. He instantly replied to my query by telling me that his book had once belonged to Collier, that it lacked pages A2 and A3, that he had bought it at the sale of the Rowfant Library, and that the book contained a note by Collier to the effect that the one perfect copy known to him was in "a collegiate library." A glance at the Rowfant

Library Catalogue proved that Locker-Lampson had bought the book directly from Collier. Here was Collier's copy traced up to date, but its inverse progression was a dead wall, nothing to be learnt of it previous to Collier's ownership. On that copy, I had drawn a blank. I turned to the other.

What did I know of it? Next to nothing, and contradictory evidence at that. The book had belonged to the antiquary and historian, William Camden. It was in a private collection. It was in a collegiate library. The matter looked hopeless, but there was a clue. The *Dictionary of National Biography* supplied it by recording the fact that by Camden's will, proved in 1623, all his books that were not claimed as borrowed from his friend, Sir Robert Cotton, were bequeathed "to his successors at Clarenceux," but that, by a legal quibble, Dr. John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln and Dean of Westminster, had seized upon them for the library of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Cathedral. Sir Robert Cotton's library is in the British Museum, but even the fanciful Collier could scarcely call the British Museum either a private collection or a collegiate library. Clearly, then, my next step must be Westminster, and here success rewarded me. On my asking for information as to whether a copy of *Endimion and Phœbe* were in the library, the librarian, the Rev. Dr. Leigh H. Nixon, most kindly, courteously, and immediately, replied that it was. Here was one copy traced at last to the place where it had been in Keats's day.

One more link and my chain of possibilities was complete. Following another suggestion of Mr. Edmonds's, I consulted Washington Irving's essay on *The Mutability of Literature* in the *Sketch Book*. I found that in Keats's time the Westminster library must have been accessible to the public on application to a verger. Irving, in his essay, describes the library, to which he was admitted in this casual way. It is quite evident from his narration that

Irving used no literary nor personal pull to gain admittance; he probably accomplished this by a ready exchange of coin, an honoured custom, perfectly understood by vergers. Irving speaks of his visit as due to the idle thought of a moment, leaving no impression of having been accorded an unusual privilege. What is more, he seems to have been allowed to take down and read such volumes as he pleased, and even to have been left alone with the books until the verger came back to tell him it was closing time.

Here, then, is the case as, with this new knowledge, we may consider it. All this detective work leads to the following deductions. Collier's copy was knocking round somewhere before he found it in 1837, and therefore it is not impossible that Keats may have come across it on some bookstall; but this, if not impossible, at the best is only a coincidental guess. What is also a guess, but with much probability behind it, is that Keats saw the copy in the Westminster Library. Suppose that he had drifted in on some occasion when he was in the Abbey, suppose him to have happened on the *Endimion and Phœbe* there, he might have copied parts of it for his own pleasure, or, with his singularly retentive memory, he might merely have been so impressed by the book that parts of it remained in his consciousness. In time, this memory would merge into his own conception, and when he came to write he may have been quite oblivious to the plagiarism in certain of his lines. Plagiarism did not trouble Keats very seriously, as we know, therefore, even if he remembered where he got his impulse, it is unlikely that he would check the flow of his lines on that account. That Keats did not immediately rush round to his friends and proclaim the discovery of this unique book, was undoubtedly because he had not the slightest idea that it was unique. The fact that Smethwick's edition of Drayton's *Poems* did not contain *Endimion and Phœbe*, meant nothing. He was used to old editions of old poets varying in content.

Again, even if he told his friends, it is extremely doubtful if the bibliographical knowledge of any one of them, even Hunt, was of an extent which would have meant a realization of Keats's discovery. Readers of Keats's day were largely dependent upon chance encounters with old books in shops and on stalls. Browsers have no place at the British Museum, one must know what one wants before one can ask for it. And how could one ask for Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe* when no one had the least notion that such a book existed? Running across it somewhere, and not inconceivably in the Westminster Library, Keats read and assimilated it, happy in its discovery for himself, totally ignorant of its rarity and its importance to scholars on that account.

A natural supposition for any one not aware of all the facts, would be that Keats found the quotations from *Endimion and Phœbe* in *England's Parnassus*, which he could have read at the British Museum, or in *Helicona*, published in 1814, which contained a reprint of the *Parnassus*. But this supposition is untenable, because, of the eighteen extracts from Drayton's poem in the *Parnassus*, only two are among those which compose the sum of Keats's borrowings from that work as already tabulated.[1] These two are the description of Mount Latmus, and the beginning of Endimion's flight through the air.

There is still a third possibility, which is that the two copies of *Endimion and Phœbe* known to Collier were not the only ones in existence, and that somewhere, somehow, Keats had access to another. But this seems the slimmest sort of speculation, since to-day, with the agents of multi-millionaire book-collectors combing every hole and corner for lost books and paying fabulous prices for any such that turn up, it is most unlikely that a third should not have been found if there be one. True, over a hundred years have elapsed since Keats wrote *Endymion*, plenty of time

[1] See Vol. I, pp. 330–331.

for a book to be burnt or torn up for waste paper, but we need not stretch our theoretical guesses so far, I think. It is enough to realize that it is by no means impossible for Keats to have read Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe*, and, in view of the internal evidence of Drayton's poem and Keats's *Endymion*, the event becomes not merely probable, but a certainty.

Having dutifully examined the dry and dusty question of source, we may now take up the far more interesting subject of the poem itself. For this, it is necessary to go back to Keats's sojourn at Carisbrooke. I have already given my reasons for believing that Keats began *Endymion* at that place on some day between April eighteenth and April twenty-third.[1] In the letter from there to Reynolds, after saying "I shall forthwith begin my Endymion," Keats continues "which I hope I shall have got some way with by the time you come, when we will read our verses in a delightful place I have set my heart upon, near the Castle." Of course, it is the merest fancy to suppose that Keats really did begin his poem in this delectable nook; he may, or may not, have done so. But if we do not know the whereabouts of his first actually putting something down on paper, we do know, at least, that it was at Carisbrooke, and we also know what sort of thoughts had been singing through his brain for some time past. Chapman's *Homer*, the Elgin Marbles, the everlasting myths of antiquity — these shreds of beauty enduring out of a vanished world were very part and parcel of his daily communings and speculations, whip-lashes and trumpets goading him on.

I propose to consider *Endymion*, Book by Book, as Keats wrote it; and, for the purpose of clarity, I have put each Book into a separate division. All that has been said so far is in the nature of an introduction; from now on, the poem will be dealt with directly.

[1] See Vol. I, pp. 306–307.

Book I.

So Keats, sitting down at Carisbrooke, either indoors or out, began his poem:

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

The next line came afterwards — after the briefest of intervals perhaps, but still afterwards. The first line is a full thought by itself; it was at once a statement of fact, a creed, and a whistling to keep up his courage, for it is a fearsome thing actually to write down the first words of a long poem, much brooded over and considered upon. Those first words are like the shove which separates a boat from the safe wharf of mere speculation, and starts a voyage across an unknown sea, full of hardship, and peril, and strain, toward a destination which may never be reached. The opening lines of *Endymion* meant the untarnished and ever-renewing splendour of the moon; the glory of old legend; they were a proud challenge to those who count the moon and legend stale; a comforting conclusion that, however the poet may fail, his theme is worthy and unassailable.

There is a tale that Keats composed this first line when he was living in St. Thomas's Street with his fellow medical students, Cooper, Mackereth, and Henry Stephens. This tale has it that the first version was "A thing of beauty is a constant joy," and that, upon criticism by Stephens, Keats altered the line to its present form. Sir B. W. Richardson, recollecting a conversation with Stephens many years later, is the authority for this statement, and it may be true. It does not matter either way, but personally I doubt it. So good a line would surely have got itself into one of the poems of 1816; it could easily have found a place in *I Stood Tip-toe*, for instance, while its perfect applicability to his state of mind at the time of his going to the Isle of Wight seems to date it more prob-

ably from then or shortly before. Sir Sidney Colvin thinks that the first twenty-four lines of *Endymion* belong to the *I Stood Tip-toe* period. I disagree with him. They catalogue beauties, it is true, but they are the beauties all about him at Carisbrooke.

This is a Spring world; *I Stood Tip-toe* was a world in the full flush of Summer. There, there were violets, bluebells, sweet peas, even marigolds; here are trees just leaving out, daffodils, clear brooks, sheep, and, with a leap forward as to season, musk-roses coming into bloom. But here too is the loneliness and passion he has been going through, for these excellent natural things wreathe

> "A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
> Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
> Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
> Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
> Made for our searching; yes, in spite of all,
> Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
> From our dark spirits."

This is as far as possible from the attitude of *I Stood Tip-toe* and the other poems of that period, and is a direct reflection of the "continual burning of thought" he has been going through.

It is, of course, extremely dangerous to assume that a poet is actually among the scenes he describes. But there seems no doubt that, in this beginning to *Endymion*, Keats is painting an exact picture of his surroundings at the moment of writing. He will "trace the story of Endymion" now, while

> "... each pleasant scene
> Is growing fresh before me as the green
> Of our own vallies: so I will begin
> Now while I cannot hear the city's din;
> Now while the early budders are just new,
> And run in mazes of the youngest hue

About old forests; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk."

Mr. Mackail, in a most interesting paper in the *Keats Memorial Volume*, points out that the "old forests" probably refers to Parkhurst Forest, which, he says, "still retained its oaks notwithstanding the heavy drain of naval timber from it during the Napoleonic wars." Mr. Mackail is also probably right in believing that lines 201–203 of this First Book:

"Swelling downs . . .
. . . where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold"

comes directly from the "blooming furze" of his coach ride to Southampton, and that the letter to Reynolds about Shanklin Chine and St. Catherine's Hill turns into the passage beginning with line 74, of Book II:

". . . one track unseams
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
Of Ocean fades upon him."

These are fascinating speculations, and *Endymion* is particularly rich in such, but we must not linger too long with them. What is very strange about this opening of *Endymion* is the expression of the rigid time allowance which Keats set himself, and the fact that it was strictly adhered to. Following immediately upon the dairy pails, Keats continues:

". . . And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees

Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finished: but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all about me when I make an end."

He finished *Endymion* on November twenty-eighth, 1817, just seven months after beginning it.

So far, so good, he has written a very beautiful opening, but it is not so different from descriptions he has done before. It is, after all, chiefly a lyrical outburst as it stands. Fifty-seven lines down on paper and no real beginning made! One more shiver of fear, a little more whistling to his courage in the lines

"And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness:
There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed."

This is a decided tumble from the lyrical passage which precedes it, but it serves clumsily to leap a gap, and Keats let it stand — let it stand even after revision, which was a blunder, but by the time revision came the poem had been going on so long that he let many things stand.

After this halting peroration, Keats plunges with firm determination into his story. He is fairly off, and the poem is begun.

The true beginning of *Endymion*, then, is at the sixty-third line. It starts with a description of Mount Latmos, which is again the Isle of Wight made grander and bolder, with mountains instead of rolling hills, and deep gullies, wolf-haunted, taking the place of its chines. Paths wander through fern and ivy banks all leading to an open space which Keats infelicitously, even if with Elizabethan precedent, calls a "wide lawn." In the midst of this clearing

stands an altar. It is sunrise, which we may regret that Keats chooses to speak of as "Apollo's upward fire," but, forgetting that artificiality, nothing could better give the brightness of the sun than

> "The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
> To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass."

Suddenly a throng of children bursts into the clearing, followed by maidens carrying baskets of flowers and, after them, shepherds. Behind the shepherds walks an aged priest, bearing wine and sweet herbs. Another crowd of shepherds, and in the midst of a multitude, on a car harnessed to three dappled horses, a youth is drawn into the circle. He is dressed as a chieftain, with a silver bugle and a boar-spear. A goodly fellow, but evidently a prey to some secret trouble.

The whole company, ranged in a circle about the altar, is addressed by the old priest, who tells them of the bounties which Pan has heaped upon them, ending with this charming bit of perfect realism:

> "... The merry lark has pour'd
> His early song against yon breezy sky,
> That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Those lines set the scene with admirable succinctness. Having finished his exordium, the priest lays the herbs on the altar, sets fire to them, and pours the wine upon the ground, and, while the pyre burns, the whole multitude sings a hymn to Pan.

This *Hymn to Pan* is one of the finest things that Keats ever wrote. It is remarkable for the way in which the emotion soars up and up to the very last line. Technically, it is a perfect example of variation within a pattern. No stanza is exactly like another, yet all have a similar music slightly changed. The short last line is a fine touch, but in one stanza the short line is the third from the end instead

of the last. In stanza two, the broken lines are simply delightful, but Keats knew too much to repeat so bold a device again. There is here the flavour of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, that touch so indubitably English and Elizabethan, and yet Keats, keeping it, has at the same time altered it so that it becomes at once modern and undateable. He has taken his models and made them over in his own image, for who but Keats would write

> "And gather up all fancifullest shells
> For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells."

The movement is most satisfying, the poem breaks into a music of its own which the introduction of tone could only mar. How happy the epithets (and never one duplicated!) given to Pan; how daring the desertion of Pan in the last line of the first stanza; and how unexpected the rhyme which makes of the last line the crown and glory of Pan himself, although he is not mentioned! The sheer volume of noise in the last three lines is astounding:

> "And giving out a shout most heaven rending,
> Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan,
> Upon thy Mount Lycean!"

Many elements go to make up this immense volume of sound, among which we should not overlook the rhyme of "out" and "shout" in close juxtaposition. Never were a finer series of effects than Keats has hit upon in this *Hymn*. One would like to know where and when it was written, and under what circumstances Keats was so thoroughly overwhelmed by his own subconscious self. Nowhere else in the whole of *Endymion* is Keats so taken possession of and carried away by the flood of his own creative power.

When, months afterwards, Keats read the *Hymn to Pan* to Wordsworth, the older poet's comment was "a pretty piece of Paganism," which touch of superciliousness must have been a trifle dampening. And we can but smile at

Wordsworth's orthodoxy taking fright, for anything less Pagan can hardly be imagined. It is no more Pagan than the whole of *Endymion* is Greek. Keats never had the slightest knowledge or comprehension of the true Greek spirit. What is beautiful in *Endymion* comes from itself, without any necessary reference to Greece or anywhere else.

As if exhausted by the effort which produced the *Hymn to Pan*, the next hundred lines of *Endymion* are of an almost insupportable dullness. Two little tricks of technique relieve the outset of the passage: the displaced accent of "abrupt thunder" which is almost onomatopœic in its effect; and the whole series of displaced accents in line 313, whereby the stately march of the iambic line is shattered to bits and we seem to be all at once whirled away into the blythe dance rhythm of

"Young companies nimbly began dancing."

What happens in these hundred lines is simply a description of the breaking up of the multitude, released from the unity of emotion in which the *Hymn to Pan* had held them, into relaxed and cheerful groups pursuing various forms of amusement. Some dance, some watch the quoit players or the archers, some listen to stories, some dream of ancient legend, which gives Keats a chance to bring in various classic myths that are a weariness to read as he has told them here. About Endymion and the old priest, a group gathers, whose conversation takes on a sober tinge as, one by one, each imagines himself in Elysium and relates who among the departed he wishes most to meet. Endymion, however, says nothing, and no one is a whit the wiser as to the sorrow which, as all can plainly see, is his chief preoccupation. This passage contains one of the carelessnesses which were so oddly left in the published version of the book: line 335 lacks a syllable. It runs:

"Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top."

Buxton Forman suggests that Keats intended "the heavy monosyllable 'Branch' to do duty for a whole foot or time-beat," which would be all very well if there were any reason for so weighting the word. But the words to be dwelt upon in the line are "down sweeping," the branch is of no importance except for its down sweeping movement. It seems more likely that Keats meant to write "downward sweeping" and in the hurry of composition left out half the word. It is important to remember that this First Book was corrected as it stood and no fair copy made, and that Keats was a wretched proof-reader. It is, however, but fair to say that in a letter to Taylor of February twenty-seventh, 1818, Keats, who is reading the proof, refers to this line and says it should have no comma, but does not mention the lost syllable. He quotes it, with the two words immediately preceding, all in one line, "the raft branch down sweeping from a tall ash-top," which probably is where the confusion of ear occurred. After all, a false foot can be borne, but one cannot bear the horrible line that follows:

> "Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope
> Those who would watch."

This is one of the places where one shudders and tries to forget.

To return to the story. While Endymion is lost in melancholy dreams, he hears a voice close beside him. It is his sister Peona, who persuades him to leave the assembly and go away with her. The name Peona seems to have been an invention of Keats's, as indeed was her existence, she has no place in legend or poetry until Keats gave her one. Sir Sidney Colvin says that her name was perhaps suggested "by that of Pæana in the fourth book of the *Faerie Queene*, or by the Pæon mentioned in Lemprière as a son of Endymion in the Elean version of the tale, or by Pæon, the physician of the gods in the *Iliad*, whom she resembles in her quality of healer and comforter; or very

probably by all three together." I think the *Iliad* a little too remote in connection here, and personally I am willing to stake my faith on Lemprière. At any rate, it is a charming name, and we may thank Keats for suppressing the diphthong.

The two steal away from the throng and wander

> "Along a path between two little streams . . .
> . . . to where these streamlets fall,
> With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush,
> Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush
> With crystal mocking of the trees and sky."

In the interleaved copy of *Endymion* which Woodhouse had bound up for his own use, he has underlined "mocking" and written against it in the margin "for reflection." This amusing meticulousness must have been a little galling to Keats on the occasions when his sage friend undertook to criticize him, which seem to have been many.

At the confluence of these streams, Endymion and Peona find a little boat, into which they get, and steered by Peona reach a small island and disembark in "a shady, fresh, and ripply cove." This is a favourite retreat of Peona's, for here is

> ". . . an arbour, overwove
> By many a summer's silent fingering;
> To whose cool bosom she was used to bring
> Her playmates, with their needle broidery
> And minstrel memories of times gone by."

We may be very sure that Keats owed this picture to Shakespeare. To trace Keats's indebtedness to one or another poet would need a volume to itself, for Keats was a handy borrower, he recognized no law of *meum et tuum* in the matter of writing. I shall note only such cases as tend to throw light on his thoughts or doings at the moment of setting them down, or which reveal some hint of his psychology. Peona's playmates embroidering and

singing are taken directly from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Helena says:

> "We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
> Have with our needles created both one flower,
> Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
> Both warbling of one song, both in one key."

Keats's mind was stuffed with quotations from Shakespeare, but what probably put this one into his head was the fact that Severn had just completed a picture of this scene, which was then on exhibition at the Royal Academy. The picture was entitled *Helena and Hermia* and had this very quotation as a superscription.[1] George Keats, in a letter to Severn postmarked "May 22, 1817,"[2] speaks of having written about it to John, who was then at Canterbury. The line about Peona's playmates is 434 of Book I. It seems hardly likely that Keats had written so little by the end of May, but, of course, we do not know how long before writing to Severn George had sent his letter to John. The picture had been a-painting for some time, and its appearance at the Academy, and where it would be hung, was undoubtedly a frequent subject of speculation among the friends, which must have brought it intermittently to Keats's attention. If we cannot determine the date of the passage from George's letter, we can, at least, see — to appropriate Mr. de la Mare's well known line about Miss T — how everything that Keats did and read turned at once into Keats.

In this arbour, Peona induces Endymion to lie down and rest. He falls asleep while she watches. So quiet is it that

> ". . . a whispering blade
> Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling
> Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling
> Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard."

[1] See Vol. I, p. 108.

[2] *Bulletin of Keats-Shelley Memorial*, Rome. No. 1. *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

The melancholy effect on Keats of the sound of gnats buzzing is interesting. Here he calls a gnat "wailful"; in the ode *To Autumn*, the "small gnats mourn."

This pleasant, quiet scene is followed by an invocation to sleep, which is, on the whole, much better than that of the year before in *Sleep and Poetry*. Keats copies in some sort the sleepy images of Spenser's bed of Morpheus in the *Faerie Queene*. Not that he chooses the same images, Keats's are at once splendid, confused visions such as come on the margin of sleep, and auditory hallucinations of soothing sounds. Sleep is the

> "... great key
> To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
> Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,
> Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves
> And moonlight; aye, to all the mazy world
> Of silvery enchantment."

I think that few people have noticed the excellent psychology of this invocation. The comparative reasonableness of the "golden palaces" gives way to a music already somewhat "strange," which ushers in fountains with a touch of the grotesque about them. The trees are unlike those of the waking world, "bespangled caves" gives points of glittering light playing over darkness, the music sounds mellow and far, it repeats itself and echoes, ceases to be music, becoming instead the continued roar of waves, while the sparkling scintillations change to a broad and serene light, the sleeper is in a "mazy world" where contours merge and fade and all that remains is a silver efflorescence flooding a dazed feeling of delight. Then comes forgetfulness. Keats must have experienced just this sort of falling asleep a thousand times, as we all have, if we stop to think of it.

Endymion wakes refreshed and very grateful to Peona for her care, and, as a proof of his affection for her, vows

to stop grieving and take up his normal life again. Peona receives this information in a singular manner, she takes her lute and sings. Keats makes use of the music to bring in a fine alliterative effect in the last line of the passage:

> ". . . 'Twas a lay
> More subtle cadenced, more forest wild
> Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child."

The irritating trick of accenting a past participle on its silent last syllable — cadencéd — a trick constantly employed throughout *Endymion*, is overlooked by the reader in the sad, wistful, crooning sound of "lone lulling." And the couplet to which this line belongs was a correction! It took the place of six not particularly effective lines. One can only wish that Keats had revised the whole of *Endymion* with a greater energy, for where he makes corrections they are invariably an improvement.

Endymion is melted into a communicative mood by the song, and Peona, seeing this, and having spurred her courage by the music, lays her lute aside and begins to question him. What has happened? Has he offended the gods in any way? Has he shot a Paphian dove, or wounded one of Diana's deer-herds; has he perhaps caught sight of Diana herself on some occasion, a sight which he knows no mortal may live after seeing?

Endymion suddenly notices that she, too, is troubled, and divines that it is on his account. A ghastly passage in the original draft is here altered into the innocuous reading of the printed text. These colourless lines are relieved by a broad and virile image in

> "I, who still saw the horizontal sun
> Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world."

It is no matter that Keats probably got this from Thomson's *Seasons*, where, in *Winter*,

> ". . . The horizontal sun,
> Broad o'er the south, hangs at his utmost noon."

Keats has much improved upon Thomson, which is the only justification needed for a literary theft.

Endymion declares that his ambition does not sleep, but that what he longs for is nothing that years or effort will bring him, that

> "... with so deadly gasp
> No man e'er panted for a mortal love."

He is resolved to unbosom himself now to Peona, and he straightway tells her how when the sun's chariot

> "Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,"

which Woodhouse carefully informs us is "in July," he lay beside a stream watching the sunset, when suddenly a bed of ditamy and poppies bursts into bloom beside him. At this, he marvelled greatly, and began teasing his mind to guess the cause.

> "... Thus on I thought,
> Until my head was dizzy and distraught.
> Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
> A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul;
> And shaping visions all about my sight
> Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;
> The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,
> And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim:
> And then I fell asleep."

The resemblance of this sleep passage to the invocation to sleep a hundred lines before is very striking. The same changing visions, the same growing confusion, the same impressions of sparkling light dimming into oblivion. Keats was evidently so struck with the truth of his description of the on-coming of sleep that he thought he could not better it, and gave it over again, with only the slightest of differences.

Once asleep, Endymion dreams that he is gazing at the Milky Way:

"When, presently, the stars began to glide,
And faint away, before my eager view:
At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,
And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge;
And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge
The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er
A shell for Neptune's goblet: she did soar
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
Commingling with her argent spheres did roll
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
At last into a dark and vapoury tent —
Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train
Of planets all were in the blue again."

"Loveliest moon" was a daring thing to say. It might so easily have been mawkish, and it is not. Modern taste could dispense with "Neptune's goblet," but Keats's catalogue of beauties emphatically included classic allusion, which we must remember constantly throughout the poem, and certainly

"... she did soar
So passionately bright"

brings back the reality and vividness of actual sight and takes away the chill of erudite metaphor.

The moon being for a moment shadowed by cloud, the dazed youth once more looks upward, and sees "a bright something, sailing down apace" which resolves itself into a vision that would tax any poet's invention to describe. Keats does it both well and ill.

"Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair?
Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun"

is very well. But the rest is not so good. Keats wished to outdo himself here, of course, but it must be admitted that the particular bugbears of his early verse got the better of him. There is sentimentality, not sentiment, in his description, and there is a most unhappy confusion of feature in

"Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orbed brow;
The which were blended in, I know not how,
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs,
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings
And plays about its fancy."

Undoubtedly Keats's fancy gave his spirit something quite worthy of being clung to; but for the reader, who has only what he *says* to go upon, not what he *saw*, the result is somewhat pudding-like and produces, not wonder, but a smile. A quite indulgent smile, however, for Keats is very young and terribly in earnest. He set himself a task which only age and much technical experience could carry through, and he had neither. He is much happier when he leaves direct description for indirect, as in

"... The wind out-blows
Her scarf into a fluttering pavillion;
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies."

That is imagination functioning in absolute ease and content even if he did get his idea from Drayton, as we have seen.

The vision approaches Endymion, touches him, lifts him in her arms and rises with him into the air. But he feels

"... not fearful, nor alone,
But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky."

Here Keats again makes use of alliteration with excellent effect, and finds the surprising and perfect adjective "dangerous" for the sky. It is interesting to note that these lines also are an afterthought, come upon in revision.

It has often been objected that the love passages in *Endymion* are sentimental; some critics have gone so far as to pronounce them vulgar, which is the last thing they are. They are sensuous — and are not all love scenes so

fundamentally? Again I say, the real and unique trouble with them is that Keats was flustered by them. He wanted to say so much that he ends by saying very little. He essays to touch the core, but so blunderingly that he remains always at the circumference. Love and beauty were his creeds, out of them in combination he fashioned what he called "truth." Love to him was both fact and its own symbol. He believed in its sensual side as all idealists do; what shocked commonplace and vulgar-minded contemporaries like Bailey was that he saw purity in the approaches to the great miracle of life where they saw only indecent dalliance. Keats was, above all, no hypocrite; that which he believed to be beauty, he set down — "the principle of beauty in all things," he calls it. If Endymion can be taken as allegory at all, the allegory is just here. That to the pure all things are pure. That Nature is wise and to be trusted, and that there is a beauty of the senses which is "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." Why Keats failed in making himself understood was that his vocabulary was insufficient, and that he had not lived long enough to pass from the easier business of describing scenery and flowers to the far more difficult one of presenting human passions. Keats was on fire with love — physical, mental, spiritual — when he wrote of Endymion flying through the air in his goddess's arms, but he cannot rise out of his own heat sufficiently to crystallize it for us in terms which give its essence. He stutters and talks wildly like a boy making his first declaration of love:

> "I was distracted; madly did I kiss
> The wooing arms which held me."

It is pitifully weak, because it would be so strong. He simply could not do this sort of thing at the time *Endymion* was written, and his friends were not of the kind to help him to realize what was wrong. Some of them delighted

in his sentimental overstatement; some chid him for daring to state such things at all. Keats was far ahead of his time, as we shall see again and again.

The flight ends upon a flowery alp, in one of Keats's characteristic nature scenes:

> "... Sometimes
> A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,
> Loiter'd around us; then of honey cells,
> Made delicate from all white-flower bells."

A pretty conceit — even if quite untrue — that white flowers give the most delicate honey!

Endymion, much against his will, falls asleep, and wakes from the dream to find himself once more by the stream-side in the chilly dawn. The revulsion of feeling is too great, and Keats records it with a grotesque touch he seldom employs, but which he evidently well understood how to manage:

> "... all the pleasant hues
> Of heaven and earth had faded; deepest shades
> Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades
> Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
> Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd gills
> Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown
> In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown
> Like spiked aloe."

Peona finds the cause unworthy of the brooding, for neither he nor she have the slightest idea that Endymion's experience is other than a dream, or that the dream lady, although obviously not a mortal, is the goddess Diana. She chides her brother for forsaking the reality of life to dote wearily and wistfully on a dream. She does this at some length in a manner that is neither particularly good nor particularly bad. The poem lets down at this point. One feels that Keats himself is not much interested in what Peona has to say, but he has vowed to write a thousand

lines to a Book and he is only at a bare eight hundred. Also he must have some sort of a plausible ending. He finds it in what is, if not the best poetry, at least the most moving bit of personal revelation in the whole of this First Book. Here is Keats's creed, his longing, his hope and dedication. For *Endymion* is at once Keats's criticism of life and his escape from it. Without reading into *Endymion* allegory as a whole, we may, without too much difficulty, disentangle those parts in which Keats speaks in his own person. Ambitious as he is, declares Endymion, it is no mere idle dream which could so disrupt his life. "Wherein lies happiness?" he asks, and answers himself that it is "a fellowship with essence." This is "the clear religion of heaven." When the beauty of nature, close mingled with the beauty of history and legend, moves the heart

> . . . that moment have we stept
> Into a sort of oneness, and our state
> Is like a floating spirit's."

This is man joined to nature by the mere beauty of earth, joined to the past of his race through the consideration of its history and its wealth of legendary lore. The passage goes on:

> ". . . But there are
> Richer entanglements, enthralments far
> More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
> To the chief intensity."

The "self-destroying" here is a little difficult. I take it to mean that, insignificant as a contemplation of nature may make the individual man seem, unimportant as his particular life may appear measured against that of the race, personal emotion and personal contact are even more capable of dissolving his ego and producing in him a sort of ideal, selfless personality. For the knowledge of his own

selflessness causes him to realize his dependence on others for the very self that he loses both by and for them. Losing himself, he yet creates the world.

The "crown" of these entanglements, says Keats,

> "Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
> Upon the forehead of humanity.
> All its more ponderous and bulky worth
> Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
> A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
> There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
> Of light, and that is love: its influence,
> Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
> At which we start and fret; till in the end,
> Melting into its radiance, we blend,
> Mingle, and so become a part of it, —
> Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
> So wingedly: when we combine therewith
> Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith."

This is both a creed and a confession. Keats speaks as a very young man filling the emptiness of his soul by the invention of an ideal love story. It is vicarious fulfillment to solace a perfectly conscious ache. But it is more than that. The vicarious satisfaction is not all. This passage is an absolutely clear statement of a position, the position that the beauty of love in all its aspects is the highest good mankind can know. What other, differently built, minds get out of religion, Keats got out of this conception of the oneness of beauty and love. His writing *Endymion* was, I think, to him what the vigil of watching his armour was to a young knight in the Middle Ages. He sees it as a stupendous task to be undertaken as a necessary part of his initiation to poethood. He has nothing to guide him through it but the belief that somehow he must embue it with his cherished idea. And here, at the end of his First Book, just at the point where his inventiveness as a story-teller dies down, he feels his poem as a dedicated labour

all the more strongly because dramatic incidents for his tale, as tale, are, for the moment, lacking. So this passage, put into the mouth of his hero, serves at once to fasten the legend more firmly to his somewhat vague main theme, and also to remind himself of the vital importance of keeping himself true to that main theme in his art and in his life. The passage ends with a serious restatement of the old proverb "'Tis love that makes the world go round":

"Just so may love . . .

. . . . . .

Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
What I know not: but who, of men, can tell
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would swell
To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,
The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet
If human souls did never kiss and greet?"

This is not good poetry, not nearly so good as the beginning of his creed statement. But Keats meant something basic in it, he was passionately in earnest about it, but again his vocabulary is inadequate; he cannot say just what he means, because in truth his idea is inchoate, not yet formed into a direct proposition. He *feels* what he means, but gropes in the expressing of it. We must not let that throw us off, however. We must realize through the words, as it were; but also we must not permit ourselves to formulate where Keats did no such thing. I do not think that Keats, in writing *Endymion*, had any more definite plan than I have tried to detail. In the rejected Preface, he distinctly says: "Before I began I had no inward feel of being able to finish; and as I proceeded my steps were all uncertain." I am perfectly sure that *Endymion* was a product of day by day imagination, meandering where it would, or could, with no guide but the "principle of beauty

in all things" and supereminently in sexual love. Later, that very Autumn, he had progressed in thinking to a point where he could put his vague, apprehended creed into something like a succinct statement, but not in May, when he was writing this First Book. Still, if we keep in mind the fact that he scarcely knew it himself, only came upon it gradually as he wrote — and lived — this statement, in a letter to Bailey, written on November twenty-second, 1817, may be taken as the key to *Endymion*, and the sole and only key:

> "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth — whether it existed before or not, — for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. In a Word, you may know my favourite speculation by my first Book."

Keats makes another commentary on this creed passage in a letter to Taylor on January thirtieth, 1818. He is either reading the proof of this book, or, more likely, he writes merely after a conversation with Taylor. After making a textual change at the beginning, he goes on,

> "The whole thing must, I think, have appeared to you, who are a consecutive man, as a thing almost of mere words, but I assure you that, when I wrote it, it was a regular stepping of the imagination towards a truth. My having written that argument will perhaps be of the greatest service to me of anything I ever did. It set before me the gradations of happiness, even like a kind of pleasure thermometer, and is my first step towards the chief attempt in the drama. The playing of different natures with joy and Sorrow."

By this we see that Keats was not quite prepared to open the whole truth to Taylor as he had done to Bailey. Nothing in this account controverts the other; indeed, as

far as the imagination stepping toward truth is concerned, the two are identical; but evidently, by the time this letter was written, Keats had armed himself with a good dramatic reason for the poem in general and this passage in particular. The only trouble with it is that it fits nothing and nowhere, and must therefore be regarded as camouflage. Obviously, the real theme touched him so nearly that he could not be expected to wave it as a banner, even to the kind and "consecutive" Taylor.

As though the very contemplation of his essential theory had served to whet his imagination afresh, Keats takes up his narrative with renewed energy after this semi-digression. Endymion proceeds to tell Peona of two more mysterious happenings, how he has seen the lovely face of his dream in the calm, reflecting waters of a well, and how once, having wandered near a grotto, he heard the soft voice he remembered calling him. What occurred within the grotto is suggested in a lament for the fleeing of "those swift moments." But Endymion assures Peona that he will cease to pine for what has been unrepeated since that day. He will live calmly, steadily — even as Keats will calmly and steadily work at his poem — without fever, he hopes. In a homely little touch, Endymion suggests that, if they return to the mainland, some kind neighbour may have brought his "car" to take them home. At this, they re-embark and the Book closes.

What shall we think of this First Book? That it shows a great advance in sustained composition over anything that Keats had hitherto attempted. That it is weak in narrative power, and fills out the slimness of incident with a good deal of padding. That there are many lines of so striking a beauty they never fail to seduce our judgment from the execrable writing of other parts. That in the *Hymn to Pan* Keats reached a height which he had before reached only in *On Looking into Chapman's Homer*. That the book is slovenly in many ways like a beautiful, un-

dusted room. That horrible rhymes, wrongly accented words, and lines — two — left rhymeless, not for effect but through sheer carelessness, are unforgivable faults. All these things are true, and altogether they make a good "try," but not a finished work of art. Never mind, the thing has magic — and life. Vigour — no; but life. Something moves here, more like a bird not yet chipped from its egg perhaps, but it is not still-born, it lives. Keats had no great reason to be proud of himself on finishing it, I think, and no reason at all to despair. I fear, at this point, he was a little too satisfied with what he had done. Haste killed the poem, but haste is attendant upon youth. Of course Keats had to go on and erect his structure before he could arrange its detail. The trouble was that he did not work over the detail enough after the job of mere building was done. It was nothing short of impertinence never to copy this First Book, but to make what corrections he did make up and down the margins of the paper. He did copy the other three Books, but at no time, when he was preparing the volume for the press or even in reading the proof, did he contemplate, consider, revise, or correct enough. He was amply aware of this in the end, but he was also aware that the poem had gone stale on his hands. A sentence in the rejected Preface states his position clearly:

> "In duty to the Public I should have kept it back for a year or two, knowing it to be so faulty; but I really cannot do so, — by repetition my favourite passages sound vapid in my ears, and I would rather redeem myself with a new Poem should this one be found of any interest."

He was simply sick of it, longing for something new. He should have kept it back; but, if he had, it would still have been unrevised. It embodied a period in his life, and where he had passed he would never go again. To bother with the thing any more probably gave him almost a sensation of physical illness. He himself had changed so materially

during the year in which he had been concerned with it, that it was practically impossible to touch it farther.

It is not my purpose to enter upon the question of Keats's use of words; better philologists than I have been writing on that subject for years. I think, myself, he has justified his verbal inventions and his archaisms by making poetry of them. When he does not make poetry, but is content with verbiage, posterity does not read. For which reason, this First Book will always be to most people the *Hymn to Pan*, the moon pictures, and the various lyric bits scattered through the pages. Endymion and Peona are not characters, but shapes of opalescent mist. The moon alone has personality and a loveliness which Keats, above all poets, has been able to suggest. Moonlight floods this whole First Book, and, in the final count, proves both its reason and symbol. For moonlight renders nothing clearly, but infuses magic into everything. And no one can deny that this most faulty of poetic attempts is, at least, possessed of a sort of silvery magic. Here, for the moment, we may leave it.

### Book II

Is it, or is it not, wise to break a narrative with personal reflections? From the point of view of our more swiftly moving age, I think the answer would be a flat negative. Keats, following his Elizabethan models, thought otherwise. Each of the four Books of *Endymion* begins aside from the story. The first three start with statements of opinion, philosophical speculations; in the last, statement is disguised under an invocation to the poet's muse. This method does slow up the narrative; but, considering these passages otherwise than æsthetically, they clarify the poem for us, and bring us into the closest contact with Keats's mind at the time of his writing them. Had more attention been paid to them as they stand, and no effort made to twist them into the rôle of annotated chapter-headings,

the poem had been better understood. I refuse to be led away from the plain text as so many critics have been. Poetry is best comprehended by taking it to mean what it says. If literature has been kept alive by scholars, as is often averred, it has been quite as often killed by them. Ingenious theories cloud the issue; what a poet means, that he sets down, and we should beware of thrusting ourselves into a scene designed to make its effect without us.

The Second Book begins with a perfectly straightforward declaration of Keats's point of view.

"O sovereign power of love!"

Keats exclaims. And has not the First Book already proclaimed the same thing? What are wars, what is history, tales of heroes and omens — is not love more important than these?

"... Juliet leaning
Amid her window-flowers, — sighing, — weaning
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
Doth more avail than these: the silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires."

Well, is he not right? If we have the courage to look matters squarely in the face, and observe the universe with the unprejudiced eye of science instead of the sentimental one of conventional and conventual religion, shall we not come to the same conclusion? Sexual love is the most stupendous fact of the universe, and the most magical mystery our poor blind senses know. To Keats it signified the penetralia of religion, the purity and grandeur of Godhead. He approaches it with awe and reverence, but also with rapture. He shudders at the task that he has undertaken, so great it seems as he envisions it:

"... Fearfully
Must such conviction come upon his head,
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
. . . . . .
The path of love and poesy"

he cries. But, undaunted, continues

"... But rest,
In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear
Love's standard on the battlements of song."

Perhaps, but more men than he have found the world too coarse-minded to listen with ears tuned to just this message. In Keats's case, commentator after commentator, shocked and uncomprehending, has tried to torture this idealization of sexual love into something else: the soul striving toward a pallid, celibate heaven, or man rising out of his individuality into a cheerless, humanitarian vacuum. Keats meant none of these things. He meant the love of man for woman, as being both his physical and spiritual fulfillment. It is the proper attitude of youth. As life cools, other conceptions take the place of this; other aspects of the central mystery impinge upon us. We imagine more universal heavens, and dare conceive of the individual as lost in a multitude of souls. So does aging humanity cloak itself in mist, because we are ourselves dissolving into the desireless emptiness of death. To suspect Keats at twenty-one of holding the soul's mission to be anything so vague and solitary is to misunderstand him completely, and to misread his obvious intention throughout *Endymion*. But it is more, it is to cast a slur upon the workings of that universe which we are afraid to trust, of those natural laws we have the temerity furtively to condemn.

How long a time elapsed between Keats's finishing the First Book and beginning on the Second, we have no means

of knowing, but we see by the brevity of this introduction compared to that of Book I that he is no longer afraid to begin on his story.

Before I take up the tale, however, I cannot resist quoting a note in Woodhouse's interleaved copy. The good Woodhouse was certainly not over-gifted with imagination. Like most commentators, he missed the essential in searching for the collateral. Two lines in this introduction read:

> "Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain
> The close of Troilus and of Cressid sweet."

Here Woodhouse, puzzling his head over whether the allusion is to Chaucer's or to Shakespeare's "work under this title," loses the significance of the lines entirely. But Woodhouse, whatever his limitations, was an honest man, he adds to his note as follows: "I have since learned that the author meant *embrace* by the word *close*." One can imagine Keats's amusement when called upon to explain his meaning.

Starting once more upon the story: In spite of his brave promises, Endymion still mopes. One day, as he sits idly dabbling his fingers in a brook, he notices a rose-bud hanging from a tree over his head. He picks it and dips its stalk into the water. The flower breaks at once into full bloom, and a yellow butterfly hidden within it opens its wings, on which Endymion seems to discern a message, and flutters away. Endymion follows

> "Through the green evening quiet in the sun,"

which, by the by, is one of the most modern lines that Keats ever wrote. The butterfly, with Endymion after it, flutters down into a glen where a fountain splashes by the side of a cave. The butterfly drops down upon the water, but disappears at the very instant that it seems to touch it. Endymion wanders about perplexed, shaking the flowers, and seeking everywhere for the butterfly. At last he gives

up the quest and flings himself down by the fountain. Suddenly a nymph rises through the water and tells him that she has led him here out of pity. She declares, in lines full of colour, but unsatisfactory in everything else, that she would give all she has to be able to help him, yet she can do nothing except commiserate his plight.

Keats's old habits betray him in this passage to the commission of a most unfortunate false accent:

> "... all my clear eyed-fish,
> Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish."

If Woodhouse, instead of seeking possible sources for lines which need none, had pointed out a few of these infelicities he would have done Keats a greater service.

The nymph continues by telling Endymion that he

> "... must wander far
> In other regions, past the scanty bar
> To mortal steps, before thou cans't be ta'en
> From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
> Into the gentle bosom of thy love."

This is one of the passages which have been seized upon in the interests of allegory. Yet it requires none. Endymion is avowedly in love with an immortal, in short with an ideal. So is Keats. Endymion must become able to bear the sight and touch of his goddess on equal terms, as a mortal he cannot so join with her. Has not Peona said that to a mortal the sight of Diana is death. Keats again must grow and change to be worthy of his own conception of love, but also he must endure through struggle to the achievement of his poem. For the symbol here seems to be double. Endymion's love for Diana is both Keats's story, merely as story, and Keats's own life and work, especially his work on this poem.

The nymph vanishes, and Endymion sits down

> "Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr
> Of smothering fancies."

Excellent lines, and excellent conception, whether Keats meant "burr" in the sense of sound, or as a husk to cover him, or as the bright halo encompassing, and making edgeless, the sun or moon.

He muses upon the ever onward-moving range of imagination, and here we have an evidence that the lines left blank in *Endymion* were so by accident. For where the published text reads:

> "... Whoso encamps
> To take a fancied city of delight,
> O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,"

Keats originally wrote:

> "... Whoso encamps
> To take a fancied city of delight,
> O what a wretch is he: 'tis in his sight."

In changing the last line to its present reading, Keats failed to notice that it did not rhyme, and left it rhymeless. This is careless, of course, but not nearly so careless or unfortunate as rhyming "vile" and "toil" a few lines farther on. Keats's ear was often faulty, and his pronunciation frequently wrong, but is it possible that he pronounced "toil" "tile"? I do not believe it. I think he simply thought the rhyme would do as it was. Another instance where Woodhouse might have been of service had he had a finer perception and troubled his mind less with unimportant erudition.

Life, thinks Endymion, is but struggle after struggle. At each bourne attained, man yearns beyond it, and so is led always on to something else. But, he considers, this is human, this is life. These very desires and efforts

> "... are still in the air, the subtle food,
> To make us feel existence, and to shew
> How quiet death is."

But, for himself, Endymion can see nothing worth doing. Yet he would rather

> "... stand upon this misty peak,
> With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,
> But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,
> Than be — I care not what."

Here Keats is speaking again in *propria persona*. For surely he would rather be ploughing through the tangles of his great poem, be that striving, persistent creature, a poet, than anything else whatever.

So Endymion, having arrived at this point in his meditation, begins to call on his love. He begs Cynthia to send down to him one little clouded moonbeam. No, rather would he beg wings to fly to her. He feels himself bursting the bars of his mortality. Verily he believes that he is again sailing with her through the sky. He feels himself above the world, but it is too much. He cries in anguish

> "... my spirit fails —
> Dear goddess, help! or the wide-gaping air
> Will gulph me — help!"

As he stands trembling, with outstretched arms, a voice from the cave speaks. The voice tells him to enter the cavern and

> "... descend where alleys bend
> Into the sparry hollows of the world!"

He is never crowned with immortality who fears to follow where airy voices lead, he is told. The injunction ends with a beautiful solemnity:

> "... so through the hollow,
> The silent mysteries of earth, descend!"

In an instant Endymion plunges into the cavern.

These wanderings of Endymion in the underworld,

must, I think, be taken purely in the light of baroque fantasy. In recounting them, Keats, the functioning poet, breaks away from Keats, the dedicated neophyte. He simply loses himself in the exuberance of his imagination. This part of the poem is perfectly described by a sentence in the old romance, *Guzman de Alfarache*, which Keats himself has underlined. Not, be it said, in any connection with *Endymion*, probably Keats did not read *Guzman* until a year later. Still, at some period, he did mark the passage, and it is singularly pertinent to this middle part of Book II, which is indeed a "rapsodie of things hudled one on the neck of another." It is amazing what a gusto of invention Keats exhibits in these underground scenes. For instance:

> "... Dark, nor light,
> The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
> But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;
> A dusky empire and its diadems;
> One faint eternal eventide of gems."

Following a vein of gold studded with jewels, "with all its lines abrupt and angular," Endymion hurries forward. This golden stratum is sometimes above, sometimes below him. It widens over him into a vast roof; it glitters beneath him so that "it seems an angry lightning." He proceeds past silver grottoes, sapphire columns. Far off, he sees "an orbed diamond"

> "... like the sun
> Uprisen over chaos."

On he goes, and reaches "a mimic temple" where, at the far end of "a long pillar'd vista," stands a statue of Diana. Around and about searches Endymion, exploring "courts and passages," until, weary with wandering, he sits down at the entrance to a "wide outlet" and gives way to a sensation of utter loneliness, well called by Keats "the deadly

feel of solitude." Keats knew whereof he wrote, had he not been alone at Carisbrooke? But what had solaced him in some measure in the Isle of Wight had been the hills and valleys, the woods just leaving out, the primroses, the distant vari-coloured sea. Endymion, on the other hand,

> "... cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
> Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild
> In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd,
> The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,
> Like herded elephants; nor felt, nor prest
> Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumbrous air."

This reads like realistic remembrance of late afternoon walks at Carisbrooke, when his work was over for the day and he got what comfort he could from nature. For Endymion, lacking these things, such loneliness is not to be endured. He asks himself why he should remain in that place, and, retracing his way to the temple, importunes Diana's effigy to let him return to earth. Nothing in his address to the statue gives any reason to suppose that he identifies his dream goddess with Diana. And yet, in his cry to Cynthia before entering the cavern, he imagines himself sailing with her through the "dizzy sky," and exclaims "How beautiful thou art!" He does not imagine himself sailing with any other goddess, so he must have considered that his dream-flight in Book I, of which he is evidently thinking when he longs for another, was made in company with the same being. It is certainly confusing to unravel what Endymion did, and did not, think. Probably Keats meant such confusion to exist because it existed in Endymion's own mind. At moments, he believes that it is, in truth, the great goddess Diana with whom he has been in communion; at other times, he scarcely credits this, and Diana disentangles herself from his dream lady to become again the remote and worshipped goddess of his youthful upbringing.

His prayer ended, "obstinate silence came heavily again," and poor Endymion, completely discouraged, bows his head. But not for long. Suddenly leaves and flowers begin to push up through the marble floor. Keats has a nice touch here to describe the rustle they make in coming, he says:

> "... the floral pride
> In a long whispering birth enchanted grew
> Before his footsteps."

Barring "floral pride," this is good, but better is the ensuing simile which shows Keats's keen observation and his power of transmuting it into words. The steady growth and spreading of the flowers is

> "... as when heav'd anew
> Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,
> Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hoar,
> Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence."

Completely regaining his self-possession at the sight of flowers and green leaves, Endymion starts again on his journey, and now, as he proceeds, he hears a strain of music, a "sleepy music" which forces him to "walk tiptoe."

This music incites Woodhouse to the expression of an extraordinary opinion. Beside these lines:

> "For it came more softly than the east could blow
> Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles;
> Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles
> Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
> To seas Ionian and Tyrian"

Woodhouse, in his interleaved copy, has written:

> "The delicate character which the Imagination is here taught to give to this music, wafted so long a distance, exceeds that suggested by the admired lines of Shakespeare

on the same subject at the beginning of his 'Twelfth Night':

> 'That strain again! It had a dying fall.
> Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet South,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour.'

It is also more complete in itself, for the comparison can be judged by the ear, & does not appeal to another sense."

That any one with the slightest pretence to poetic appreciation could prefer Keats's lines in this instance to Shakespeare's, is incredible. Apparently the word "violets" in Shakespeare's lines affected Woodhouse so strongly that he felt them and saw them and forgot the music in so doing. And what about Arion and Apollo, and the Atlantic isles, and the Ionian and Tyrian seas, do they carry no pictures, no thought of ancient myth? Are they so vague to the reader that the music sweeps over them as though they were not? To me, at least, they clutter up the lines and destroy the musical effect entirely. Keats would have done better to have left the passage at "tiptoe." Excellent, heavy-footed Woodhouse! The wonder is how Keats went on growing poetically in the face of such criticism as his friends supplied him with. Again, here, Keats leaves a line blank, and again through inattention. For "lyre" had a mate originally in the word "Dire," which followed "Tyrian." Noticing that the line was long enough without it, Keats deleted it, and, quite forgetting that a rhyme was needed to the line above, proceeded at once to change the whole passage to give a rhyme to "Tyrian." This he found, and carelessly left "lyre" forever unmated. Apart from the classical allusions, the passage does not exist. There is nothing in it to suggest music or even a sound. It is florid and empty, inappropriate and uninteresting.

The music banishes Endymion's momentary content, his absorption in the adventure as such. It brings him

back to himself and to the thought of his lost love, which so overwhelms him that he would surely, so the poem tells us, have fallen over some precipice had not a "heavenly guide" led him through a grove of myrtle trees, where the brushing of the branches against his head rouses him once more to a sense of reality. Before him is a light, somewhat oddly described as "panting." Keats likens it to sunset, peeping into a wood, so we may suppose that he intended to convey the fact that the light flickered as though it came through blowing leaves. But "panting" seems altogether bad in this connection, and one of Keats's failures. Continuing on his way toward the light, Endymion passes cupids sleeping on the grass and "after a thousand mazes overgone" he finds himself in a myrtle-walled chamber. The chamber is

> "Full of light, incense, and tender minstrelsy,"

which line gives the key to the whole passage that follows — a passage in Keats's most voluptuous and feeble vein.

In the middle of the chamber is a couch, and on the couch a sleeping youth, the description of whom is cloyingly oversweet and effeminate. Only in the colours of the covers on the couch is Keats at all happy. But his colour sense is unimpeachable; these coverlids are

> ". . . gold-tinted like the peach,
> Or ripe October's faded marigolds."

The youth disposed of, as far as portraying him goes, Keats turns his attention to the bower of flowers in which he lies, but only one of these lines reaches the poet's usual felicity of phrase in such passages. It is

> "The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush."

Three successful lines out of forty in what was meant to be a scene of rare loveliness is a poor proportion. He tried hard, but the thing eluded him. How hard he tried, and

the reason why he failed, can be seen by a note of Woodhouse's. Keats, in the midst of his description of the slumbering youth lying all relaxed upon the couch, speaks of

> "... the tenting swerve
> Of knee from knee."

Woodhouse, not unnaturally, could make nothing of the expression, but he records that Keats told him it meant "in the form of the top of a tent." By which we are expected to see raised knees somewhat divided, I suppose. But we see nothing of the kind, and there is no reason why we should. A sleeping person relaxes, and therefore the knees would fall unless something underneath held them up. For once Keats's realism fails, his observation is at fault. Not only is the expression laboured to the last degree, the effect it seeks to give is untrue to nature.

Having gazed at this strange scene, Endymion approaches one of the watching cupids with the intention of asking an explanation. But before the question is uttered, the cupid informs him that he is the recipient of the highest honour which the gods can bestow on man, for he has been permitted to enter a sacred bower. Offering Endymion a banquet of fruits, a banquet so far inferior to the supper which Porphyro spreads for Madeline in the *Eve of St. Agnes* that one is not tempted to quotation, the cupid proceeds to relate the story of Venus and Adonis. As poetry, this relation is uninteresting enough, what is interesting is the way in which Keats mingles the various versions of the myth which he has read, and adds a picturesque touch of his own.

Keats, as we know, was familiar with Sandys' translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. He was also deeply read in the *Faerie Queene*, and Shakespeare he knew almost by heart. Now Ovid, Spenser, and Shakespeare all tell the story of Venus and Adonis, and all three versions differ slightly from one another.

In Ovid, Venus falls in love with Adonis, who is the son of Myrrha and her father, Cyneras. Venus urges Adonis to hunt deer, hares, and such like animals, but to leave the fierce beasts of the forest alone. Adonis disobeys and pursues a wild boar, who turns on him and kills him. Venus finds Adonis dying, and as a memorial of her grief and love turns him into a fragrant flower.

In the Third Book of the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser gives a paraphrase of the tale as related by Ovid, but, in the sixth canto of the same Book, he departs from Ovid's ending by inventing a "Garden of Adonis" in which Adonis, restored to life, exists forever as Venus's lover.

Shakespeare, in his *Venus and Adonis*, borrows an episode from the legend of Salamis and Hermaphroditus in the Fourth Book of the *Metamorphoses*, by making Adonis reluctant to yield to Venus's advances.

Keats takes his main theme from Ovid, but adds to it Shakespeare's reluctant Adonis and Spenser's conclusion, wherein Adonis, restored to life, is given immortality. But that is not all. By a happy start of inspiration, Keats sends Venus, after Adonis's death, to Jove to plead for clemency. Jove, moved by her tears, grants Adonis half her plea. He decrees that every Winter Adonis is to lie in a tranced sleep, but, with the return of Summer, he is to wake again into life.

The narration ended, Adonis stirs, the sleeping cupids rouse themselves and rub their eyes, and far aloft appears a dove-drawn car which swiftly approaches. It is Venus, who has come for her lover's awakening. The first embraces are scarcely over, before Endymion begins to pour out his misery to the goddess. Venus tells him that she too has suffered, and in the same way. In a speech which seems sometimes addressed to Endymion, sometimes to Adonis, she explains

> "That when through heavy hours I us'd to rue
> The endless sleep of this new-born Adon',

This stranger ay I pitied. For upon
A dreary morning once I fled away
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray
For this my love."

The horrible shortening of Adonis to Adon', although not without classic precedent, Keats probably justified to himself by deciding that Venus would very likely have some pet nickname for Adonis. That would be a thoroughly Keatsian way of reasoning; in a cancelled passage in Book IV, Peona addresses Endymion as "Dear Endy." Nothing is more curious in Keats's early poems than his supreme taste in some instances and his utter lack of it in others.

Venus goes on to tell him that she has seen him wandering in a wood, and in listening to his mutterings has discovered that he loves, and has had intercourse with, an immortal, but who this immortal is she cannot discover, for

"... There is no trace
Of this in Heaven."

Feeling sure, therefore, that secrecy is needful, she will not take him up to Olympus. With this, Endymion has to be satisfied. Venus and Adonis disappear in the dove-drawn car, and Endymion is left alone in a sudden twilight.

For what purpose did Keats introduce the myth of Venus and Adonis into this Second Book? Explanations have been many, varying with the particular allegory favoured by the commentator. The reason perhaps is not so far to seek. Keats was a little put to it to fill his allotted thousand lines. He did not fear digressions, he welcomed them. I have said that his fancy ran riot in this Second Book. The springing of the flowers is a most fanciful touch, and this circumstance very probably brought to Keats's mind sundry myths of the return of Summer. There was Proserpine and Ceres, for example, but that

could hardly be fitted into his tale as, to chime with its general tenor, love and Spring must be synonymous. Hence his hitting on the legend of Venus and Adonis and inventing a Spring awakening for his hero. Again, Keats has been revelling in the beauties of things seen throughout this book, now, for a change of direction, he introduces the beauty of ancient mythology. He has been doing so all along in fragmentary bits; it is quite in keeping that he should do so once in a while more at length. There may have been a number of other reasons, due to his reading, or a conversation, or a picture. He liked the story and — it filled two hundred lines. He did not write it very well, none of this Second Book is so well written as parts of the First, but I doubt whether he was in a state of mind to know that. He just went on, wherever fancy led. Observe, I say this Book is not *written* so well as the First; as far as sheer invention goes, his wanderings in the cavern are amazing.

To have someone else believe in the reality of what he scarcely credits himself, was naturally very cheering to Endymion, and that his immortal lady kept her secret inviolate seemed to prove how dearly she cherished it. It is therefore with "unusual gladness" that Endymion resumes his journey. A certainty of future happiness banishes all thought of loneliness from him, in spite of the disappearance of Venus, Adonis, cupids, even of the bower itself. The underworld resumes its earthy magnificence. He passes

> "Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,
> Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquois floor,
> Black polish'd porticoes of awful shade,
> And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,
> Leading afar past wild magnificence."

Sometimes the way leads through zigzag tunnels; again, the diamond path crosses "enormous chasms" where

streams "all foam and roar" rush beneath him; then he finds himself overlooking

> "... the silvery heads
> Of a thousand fountains."

He dashes the waters with his spear and

> "... those spouting columns rose
> Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose
> His diamond path with fretwork."

The waters change their shapes continually through a passage of great beauty and even greater inventiveness. After watching them altering, resolving, dissolving into new forms and contours for a long time, Endymion reluctantly turns away. He passes queer gaping caves, and jutting rocks "half seen through deepest gloom." So weird is it, that Endymion's high spirits ooze away, yet the mere adventuring amid such strangeness constantly revives him. All of a sudden, he catches sight of the earth goddess issuing forth from a rugged arch beneath him. Keats imagines and describes this well:

> "... in the dusk below,
> Came mother Cybele! alone — alone —
> In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown
> About her majesty, and front death-pale,
> With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale
> The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws,
> Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
> Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails
> Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
> This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away
> In another gloomy arch."

All at once the diamond path ends, and ends at nothing. There is nowhere to set his foot, his way is lost in air. Seeing no hope, Endymion calls on Jove for help, and an eagle appears flying towards him. Endymion flings him-

self upon the eagle's back and they drop — down — down — until the sweet smell of flowers rises up to them

> "... where little caves were wreath'd
> So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd
> Large honey-combs of green."

The eagle sets him on the ground and flies away, and Endymion finds himself in

> "... a jasmine bower, all bestrown
> With golden moss."

A strange elation comes over him:

> "... His every sense had grown
> Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head
> Flew a delight half-graspable."

The suspense, infused with a vague expectation, is excellently done. It is the essence of realism and romanticism fused together. It is also drama, and Keats can so seldom manage the dramatic that the point here should not be missed. It is heightened and continued by Endymion's most human cry:

> "... will all this gush of feeling pass
> Away in solitude?"

This is strong, full of emotion; it is suggestion revealing unuttered things. Unfortunately, from this moment, the dramatic effect lessens. Suggestion gives way to statement, and the poignance of the beginning disappears. The passage is continued in Keats's usual form of narrative soliloquy. Yet it has a story interest, for it seems to prove that Endymion has now at last decided that he does not know who his goddess is. He implores her in this wise:

> "... O my love,
> My breath of life, where art thou? High above,
> Dancing before the morning gates of heaven?

Or keeping watch among those starry seven,
Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters,
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters?
Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's,
Weaving a coronal of tender scions
For very idleness? Where'er thou art,
Methinks it now is at my will to start
Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train,
And snatch thee from the morning; o'er the main
To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off
From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to doff
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh leaves."

The last line here makes up in simplicity and sharpness for the rather mediocre rest.

Endymion, in despair, decides that what he cannot have in the flesh he will seek in a dream. He goes along

"... a dim passage, searching till he found
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
He threw himself, and just into the air
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss!
A naked waist: 'Fair Cupid, whence is this?'
A well-known voice sigh'd, "Sweetest, here am I."

It is the merest prudery which denies beauty to Keats's conception in this place. The lover's words are not what they should be, any one can see that; but Endymion suddenly finding his empty, uplifted arms clasped about a naked waist is a beautiful flight of imagination, astringently, absorbingly expressed. No one is more aware than Keats himself that such scenes as this require a master poet for their portrayal. He breaks off his story to say as much:

"... Helicon!
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er
These sorry pages ...

. . . . .

> . . . but all is dark
> Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
> Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count
> Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll
> Is folded by the Muses."

Yet he feels he must not shirk his high task of announcing the love which is all things. But he is no such fool as to force theory into drama. He will set down what is, to the best of his ability, and trust that what also is, but hidden, will penetrate his reader as it has penetrated him. He has spoken his meaning, in a different connection, in his criticism *On Edmund Kean as a Shakesperian Actor*, published as current theatrical criticism in the *Champion* newspaper for Sunday, December twenty-first, 1817. In this paper, he is speaking of poetry, but it serves equally well for his attitude toward love:

> "A melodious passage in poetry is full of pleasures both sensual and spiritual. The spiritual is felt when the very letters and points of charactered language show like the hieroglyphics of beauty; the mysterious signs of our immortal freemasonry! 'A thing to dream of, not to tell!'"

We may use Keats's own words to illustrate his failure in the love scene which follows the lines I have quoted. The letters and points of his language here are not equal to the strain put upon them. They are too flat, too pale to contain the hieroglyphics of beauty. They give the sensual aspect, but their lustre is too weak for the spiritual to shine through except to the most determined of observers. It is, however, a vulgar criticism which can call this scene vulgar. There are many foolish words in it, many inadequate expressions, but not in any place is it in the least vulgar. It is even, considered aside from its verbal infelicities, done with considerable skill. For the passion of the lovers is always the passion of love, not lust. A fine instinct is required to make the distinction, and a delicate

touch is needed to keep it, and Keats has both the instinct and touch, however much he blunders in other ways. Dramatically, the scene is excellent, vivid, true to life. Yet verily Keats was inexperienced. How could any one write of such a scene to the length of one hundred and fourteen lines! I can think of no other poet who has attempted such a feat. It was not wise so to challenge fate, and fate, in the persons of many erudite but unimaginative and gross-minded chroniclers, has slain his very intention here, again and again. Only youth, uncontaminated by the jeers of the critics, has in the inmost recesses of its heart understood. How many boys and girls have found solace and joy in this passage! As Keats did, to be sure. He knew he had not done what he set himself to do, yet he could not bear to forbear. He could not tear himself away from his own creation, for he saw what he has not given us to see. We may admire his heroism, even while smiling a little sadly at the result. Keats never quite outgrew his inability to escape from the sentimental into the wide simplicity of sentiment, in direct allusion. With indirect, as we have seen, it is quite different. Following this love scene, Keats has written lines of a more perfect beauty, a poetry stronger and more magical, than can be found anywhere else in this Second Book. These lines are so well known as not to need quoting, yet I will quote them here:

> "... Ye who have yearn'd
> With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
> For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
> Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
> By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
> And then the forest told it in a dream
> To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
> A poet caught as he was journeying
> To Phœbus' shrine; and in it he did fling
> His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
> And after, straight in that inspired place
> He sang the story up into the air,
> Giving it universal freedom."

We may indeed pity; it is only the prurient who, knowing Keats's mind, have any wish to condemn.

Once more Endymion sleeps, and once more he wakes alone, but this time there is no fierceness in his regret. He is too weary with emotion for that:

> "No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars:
> The lyre of his soul Æolian tun'd
> Forgot all violence, and but commun'd
> With melancholy thought."

He takes up his quest again, but without any sense of adventure, without any sense at all except that of loss. Before, he had been eagerly observant of everything about him, now he is the most careless of travellers, entirely absorbed in reviewing his past life. He realizes that everything must be changed with him henceforward. That nothing will ever interest him again if he cannot be with his Beloved:

> "Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
> All other depths are shallow."

As he meditates, he is aware of a distant murmur which seems to be echoing his thoughts. He listens, roused to attention, and immediately two streams gush out of the rock beside him. One seems pursuing, the other retreating, and the murmur alters to voices, one imploring, the other replying. It is the nymph Arethusa, changed into a stream, fleeing the river god Alpheus. Of all Keats's stories within the story, this is the best done and the one most closely interwoven with the initial tale. For Arethusa longs to yield, but fears the wrath of the virgin goddess Diana. This finely touched irony gives the poem a fresh poignance, for we know that the high and chaste Diana is even as her fearful nymph, deeply in love; but, as Arethusa dreads her wrath, she dreads that of the other gods and goddesses. It is fear of shame that keeps Diana from acknowledging

her love for Endymion. This particular angle of his story is as though Keats were declaring once more that basic truth of all religions: that mortal must put on immortality, and immortal must share the weakness and need of humanity, to make a perfect whole of heaven and earth. I do not think that Keats thought this out; it is a sort of atavistic gloss over his gospel of love.

The irony is nicely given in a speech of Arethusa's:

> "... Cruel god,
> Desist! or my offended mistress' nod
> Will stagnate all thy fountains: — teaze me not
> With syren words — Ah, have I really got
> Such power to madden thee? And is it true —
> Away, away, or I shall dearly rue
> My very thoughts: in mercy then away,
> Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey
> My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane.
> O, Oread-Queen! would that thou hadst a pain
> Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn
> And be a criminal."

Alpheus replies:

> "... Those fitful sighs
> 'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour
> A dewy balm upon them! — fear no more,
> Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel
> Sometimes these very pangs."

But Arethusa still fears:

> "What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands
> Severe before me: persecuting fate!
> Unhappy Arethusa!"

The streams plunge "adown a fearful dell," and Endymion hears no more than a faint echo of "Arethusa" floating back to him. The scene touches him very nearly. He weeps, and prays to Diana, whom he seems at last to recognize as the goddess of his love:

"'. . . I urge
Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,
By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,
If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains;
And make them happy in some happy plains.'

He turn'd — there was a whelming sound — he stept,
There was a cooler light; and so he kept
Towards it by a sandy path, and lo!
More suddenly than doth a moment go,
The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
He saw the giant sea above his head."

So ends the Second Book, on an infinitely higher plane than that on which it was begun.

I have said that the poetry in this Second Book does not reach the level of that in the First, for there is nothing in Book II to equal the *Hymn to Pan* or some of the purely lyric passages in Book I. But, for all that, the Second Book is in some ways an advance in composition over the First. It is not so fragmentary and disconnected. Keats shows that he has a firmer hold upon his medium; he is not so much at the mercy of momentary inspiration. His sense of the dramatic has gained enormously, and his inventive faculty has reached out in every direction and taken on a far greater originality. The First Book has more charm, but there are more potentialities in the Second.

This underworld of Keats's, as Sir Sidney Colvin has pointed out, seems to have no particular symbolic meaning. It is not Hell, nor the place of departed spirits. It is as devoid of occult suggestion as Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. Its advantage to the story is that it gives a chance for new imagery. We can see this at once if we conceive of Endymion wandering over and over the world through four Books which, however differentiated topographically, would in that case be all very much the same. Since Keats had wisely ordained that his hero's

trials should be psychological, not physiological, some change of scenery was necessary to take the place of startling episode. For think how Keats has amplified the tale as told by Drayton, Fletcher, Marlowe, Shakespeare, to say nothing of those shorter allusions found in so many of the Elizabethan poets. Whatever Keats has not done in *Endymion*, he has written a psychological piece of no mean significance. Not allegorically, I am certain of that, but humanly. Endymion is Keats, is any young man, full of life, natural desire, and an idealistic habit of mind. In this Second Book, for all its rich imaginings, the chief subject is the processes of Endymion's thought. The Endymion of the First Book is a child's sketch to the Endymion of the Second. The man who steps along the sandy path and finds the sea above his head is a person. We have been inside his mind, and we know how he feels and how circumstance affects him. He claims our interest quite apart from the poem. I do not think that the Second Book is easy reading. There are not so many passages which can be picked out of their contexts and delighted in as there are in the First Book; but, if we can win through the Second Book consecutively at all, we are the gainers by finding ourselves in possession of an analysis of a state of mind which is, indeed, very well done.

We have no idea what caused this perfectly new departure in Keats. We have no Canterbury letters and only two from Hampstead, neither of which throws any light on the matter. But we can almost certainly say, from the Oxford letters, and from the very intimate knowledge we have of the rest of Keats's life, that this new departure was due to no external circumstance. That it must be the result of thinking, reading, pondering, and dissecting himself. We can be reasonably sure that Keats thought out this Second Book of *Endymion* by a constant reference to himself. This is how he had felt in such and such a case, this is how he would most assuredly feel in another. It

was really great fun to do, like exploring a new country. Keats did not know that he had it in him, he had never approached it before. So he goes up to Oxford, and the tone changes again, as we shall see.

Book III.

Keats reached Oxford on a visit to his friend Bailey about the second or third of September. The first two Books of *Endymion* were finished, or rather the first drafts of them were. Keats had left Endymion under the sea. It was therefore the sea, and Endymion's wanderings in it, which were now to be described.

By the extraordinary law of paradox which all poets know well, Keats, having left it, is obsessed by the sea. This had begun at Hampstead. By a perfectly natural reaction, Keats, returned to London in Midsummer, begins to look parchingly back to the Isle of Wight and Margate and Hastings. The Isle of Wight as valley, down, and wood, with the sea as incidental vision, had given him the scene for his First Book. The earth journey of Book II seems to have been sheer fancy, unless, and it is a tenable theory, the columned nave and transepts of Canterbury Cathedral had been the suggestive influence. One can easily imagine it. Stone is of the earth, and fretted arches and pillared porticoes, to say nothing of underground vaults and narrow stairways leading from crypts to bell-lofts, may readily become the inciters to just such scenes as Keats invented for his Second Book. But back at Hampstead he was not surrounded by anything which could be utilized in his poem. The hot, dusty streets, the heavily-leaved trees, the smells and noises assailing him through open windows, turned his mind longingly back to the sea. So under the sea goes Endymion, and Keats is at the opening of another book.

Since the scheme of *Endymion* required an introduction to each book, Book III must have one. Nothing pertinent

seems to have suggested itself, however, and the introduction written is really twisted unmercifully to make it take on a semblance of leading into anything to do with the story. Woodhouse records that "Keats said, with much simplicity, 'It will be easily seen what I think of the present ministers, by the beginning of the Third Book.'" That may be true, for Keats probably did think quite as badly of them as the introduction states, but what had the "present ministers" to do with *Endymion?* Nothing, of course. Let us do a little more guessing and suppose that Keats, in turning over his unpublished manuscripts, happened on the sonnet *On Receiving a Laurel Crown from Leigh Hunt*, and was struck with the "turbans and crowns" passage. He thought well enough of this sonnet to write it on a blank page in Reynolds's copy of the *Poems*. Here was a cue to go on with, and in lieu of a better he took it. The Tory government becomes a fine, bombastic generality, which floats, be it a little awkwardly, into the "throned seats unscalable" of cosmic powers; and, once arrived at that point, the cosmic powers melt without much difficulty into the Olympian gods of Keats's tale. Here, having circled back to mythology, Keats breaks off and calls it a day. Opposite line 41 in the draft, Keats has written "Oxford, Sept. 5." As Bailey has told us that this Third Book was written at the rate of fifty lines a day, and that if Keats fell short of his quota one day he would make it up the next, we may reckon this as his first day's work.

This introduction, although it fits nothing, is not bad in itself. It sounds well, yet, to speak truth, it has more sound than sense. It starts off with considerable dignity:

> "There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men
> With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
> Their baaing vanities, to browse away
> The comfortable green and juicy hay
> From human pastures."

The first two lines here are so good that they have passed into current allusion, and while the figure of the nibbling sheep is something of a drop in sentiment, it is a striking figure. Bailey found fault with "baaing," but Bailey would. The nonsense begins with the lines:

> "Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
> Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
> Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes."

The "idiot blink" is bad enough, but when we come to the unpacking of the foxes nonsense is fairly on the rampage. The foxes, to anyone unfamiliar with their Biblical origin in the *Book of Judges*, are a difficulty, but "unpack'd" is an outrage. We will suppose Keats's meaning to be that each pair of foxes runs round on its own hook, that the pack is scattered; but can he have imagined that a pack of foxes ever advances in a serried order like a regiment of troops on parade? And, if we assume another possible meaning, what an odd, inadequate word to describe the loosing of foxes caught and fastened tail to tail by fire-brands! No, it would appear that "unpack'd" was put in for the rhyme; but the preceding line ends with "O torturing fact," and we can hardly believe Keats to have found this exclamation so necessary that he had to preserve it to the extent of forcing in a ridiculous word to rhyme with it. Bailey, quibbling over "baaing," which in spite of its cacophony is quite an illuminating epithet, seems to have overlooked the inanity of unpacking the foxes entirely. We have "blear-ey'd nations" proudly mounting to their "spirits' perch"; "far majesties" who with "gorgeous pageantries enrobe our piece of heaven" (what enrobes the other pieces we are not told); all sorts of windy foolishnesses which are best expressed by the slang term "hot air." Keats had an idea, however far fetched in its context, but he descended to the trick of mere vapid sonority in presenting it. The amount of it is

that he had an off day, and, realizing it, stopped nine lines short of his prescribed stint. And the thing bored him so that he never altered it, a proceeding quite characteristic of his methods with *Endymion*, but most unfortunate.

Beginning his second day's work, Keats exhibits a quality which is too often overlooked by critics of this long, unequal poem; this is his sense of construction. In spite of the waywardness and irrelevance of much of the narrative, Keats, again and again, by some sudden turn, brings it back to its path. Remember that Keats in *Endymion* sees the moon under a dual aspect: as the most beautiful thing in nature, and as the highest peak of love that man can know. In the First Book, the two halves of this aspect are pretty well mixed; as I have said, the whole of Book I is flooded with moonlight. In Book II, the moon, as moon, is in abeyance; it is the moon as Diana that is insisted upon. But Keats does not wish to lose either half of his conception in the other. The magic of moonlight must not be allowed to disappear from his poem. It was, with perfect propriety, excluded from the Second Book, partly because Endymion was underground, partly, and chiefly, because in that Book it was the love motif which Keats wanted to emphasize. The introduction gave the tone at the outset, and Keats followed it through the Book without deviation. Now, however, Keats's constructive sense tells him that it is high time to get back to the moon, the moon floating in the heavens and casting silvery light upon the world. He does it rather neatly by calling Apollo to witness that of all the "thousand powers" who

> ". . . keep religious state
> In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne"

Diana is the "gentlier-mightiest." So he leads up to one of the loveliest moon passages in the poem. There are a few artificial words in it, but not enough to mar the whole:

"O Moon! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in:
O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
Thou dost bless everywhere, with silver lip
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,
Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields divine:
Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes;
And yet thy benediction passeth not
One obscure hiding-place, one little spot
Where pleasure may be sent: the nested wren
Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf
Takes glimpses of thee; thou art a relief
To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
Within its pearly house. — The mighty deeps,
The monstrous sea is thine — the myriad sea!
O Moon! far-spooming Ocean bows to thee,
And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load."

Thus Keats returns to the moon, and to his immediate obsession, the sea.

It is worth while to note here Keats's feeling for sound and its suggestions, that onomatopœic sense he had so strongly. He says "spooming," not "spuming," because the double "o" sound is more open than the "u," and more capable of suggesting the wide surge and wind-rush of an immensity of breaking waves. After the quiet sylvan scenes which had preceded, he wanted to give the moon's effect over a vast area. He has precedent for his spelling in Beaumont and Fletcher and in Dryden. That this spelling was intentional here for the reasons I have stated, seems evident, as in line 655 of this same Book, where no such reasons existed, the word is written "spume."

Keats heightens this moon effect by juxtaposing to it the melancholy desolation of the ocean floor, strewn with those objects which wrecked and decaying vessels dis-

gorge. It has been pointed out by many editors that a passage in Shakespeare's *King Richard III* was probably in Keats's mind when he wrote his. Let us compare the two, for a reason which I will state in a moment. Shakespeare's description is at the beginning of the fourth scene of the First Act:

> "What dreadful noise of waters in mine ears!
> What ugly sights of death within my eyes!
> Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
> Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
> Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
> Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
> All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea:
> Some lay in dead men's skulls; and, in those holes
> Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,
> As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,
> Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
> And mock'd the dead bones which lay scatter'd by."

Keats's lines are :

> "... Far had he roam'd,
> With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd,
> Above, around, and at his feet; save things
> More dead than Morpheus' imaginings:
> Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large
> Of gone sea-warriors; brazen beaks and targe;
> Rudders that for a hundred years had lost
> The sway of human hand; gold vase emboss'd
> With long-forgotten story, and wherein
> No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin
> But those of Saturn's vintage; mouldering scrolls,
> Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls
> Who first were on the earth; and sculptures rude
> In ponderous stone, developing the mood
> Of ancient Nox; — then skeletons of man,
> Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,
> And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw
> Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe

These secrets struck into him; and unless
Dian had chaced away that heaviness,
He might have died."

Shakespeare's passage is so infinitely superior to this that no comment is needed on that score. But, if we study the technique of the two descriptions, the reasons for this superiority are abundantly clear; so clear that nothing could better serve as an illustration of the weakness of Keats's verse along certain lines. Shakespeare's sentences are as direct as though he were writing prose. He is, it is true, employing blank verse, which obviates the necessity of rhyme; but it does not take away the need for poetry. Poetry, the highest type of poetry, is never once departed from, yet it requires no fine figures of speech, no metaphors, no interpolated allusions, to make itself felt. The pound, pound, pound, of statement only adds to it. The force of simplicity, the vividness of short, sharp, actual speech, carries an emotion with it that can be got in no other way. The precision of Shakespeare's utterance is nothing less than marvellous. And then the economy of it! Shakespeare says in twelve lines what it took Keats twenty merely to approach, and yet Shakespeare seems to have given the fuller picture.

Now take Keats. Inversions, extraneous details, ancient gods called in to help out short lines or lend a circumstance to tag a rhyme. Unnatural archaisms such as the ponderous stones of Nox, or behemoth and leviathan, which come directly from Milton and should have been left there, or at least reserved for some more appropriate occasion. Cheap expressions, again in the cause of rhyme, as in the revellers who had never "dipp'd a chin." Preposterous suggestions, as that of elephants and eagles at the bottom of the sea. We might be gazing at the wreck of Noah's ark. The mind is led away from the scene in almost every line by some impertinent interpolation.

But none of these things is the reason for which I have made this comparison. The reason is deeper. It lies in the fact that Keats's description is soothed and succoured out of all semblance of horror. Shakespeare feared no horror; he saw plainly and truly. Keats tricked out his lines; Shakespeare left his stark. This inveterate desire to soften what is inevitably harsh, we shall have occasion to come back to later. Keats tells us that, seeing these things, his hero might have died were it not for the consoling moonbeam, therefore we must think that Keats intended them to be dreadful; but in his soul Keats hated horror, and this tendency of his to gentle and smooth is very much in evidence here.

Now that we have seen what Keats did not do in this passage, let us observe that the idea of it, coming in where it does, is good. It makes the moon even more important than it would otherwise have been, for it becomes the saviour, the comforter, and at the end we see it once more sailing above all these tokens of death, pouring its rays down upon them through translucent water.

Having fairly set the moon once more in the sky, Keats proceeds to mingle his two aspects. For he will not have his readers forget that love is the undercurrent of his theme; also, he must return to the telling of his tale. Cynthia pines as one sorrowful; she is changed and woe-begone:

> "She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loveliness
> Is wan on Neptune's blue: yet there's a stress
> Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,
> Dancing upon the waves, as if to please
> The curly foam with amorous influence."

Can we not see that cape of trees, black against the scattered brilliance of the moon-touched water? In the matter of word-painting, Keats has done nothing better than this. He has not merely observed the effect, it has soaked into his very bones. "Amorous influence" is a blot, he learnt

a wiser diction later, but the purely descriptive lines have no flaw.

Moon-rays cannot shine through the earth, which is the very excellent reason why, in the Second Book, they do not do so. But moonlight can pierce water; therefore Endymion, wandering along under the sea, is comforted by a shaft of silver radiance falling upon him through the waves. Cheered by this stray moonbeam, he lies down in his usual manner and waits until morning to continue his journey. Starting forth again, he meditates on the extraordinary effect which the moon has always had upon him. We may take it as Keats speaking again of himself when Endymion says:

> "What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move
> My heart so potently? When yet a child
> I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd."

This passage is too long to quote entire. It is interesting to observe the divided strands of Keats and Endymion in it, for Keats does not forget the agricultural pursuits of Endymion in which he himself could have had no share. But it is clearly Keats in the voice of Endymion who cries

> "Thou wast the mountain-top — the sage's pen —
> The poet's harp — the voice of friends — the sun;
> Thou wast the river — thou wast glory won;
> Thou wast my clarion's blast — thou wast my steed —
> My goblet full of wine — my topmost deed: —
> Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!"

To Keats, the moon is more than the most beautiful of the heavenly bodies, more than the cause of magical effects of light, she is an almost mystical influence. Keats was no mystic, he had not an iota of mysticism in him; but moonlight evidently moved him strangely, and let loose those subconscious promptings which are the genesis of all poetry.

For some reason, Endymion seems again confused as to the identity of his goddess. For he says that all his devotion was to Diana until "my strange love came." We might suppose that he meant merely that his worship had changed to love, were it not that he continues:

> "She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away —
> Yet not entirely; no, thy starry sway
> Has been an under-passion to this hour."

And again:

> ". . . Dearest love, forgive
> That I can think away from thee and live! —"

It is quite obvious that Keats means to show that, without knowing it, it is always Diana whom Endymion loves. But certainly, at this moment, Endymion does not know it himself. And it is quite possible that I am wrong in thinking that Keats ever meant him to seem confused on the subject. The passage in the beginning of Book II can be read either way, or, more likely, Endymion is, as it were, in love with both his dream-goddess and Diana at the same time and can scarcely himself disentangle the two sensations.

In the midst of his invocation to Diana, Endymion looks up and, with a start, sees in front of him an old man. The old man is Glaucus, and the rest of Book III is concerned entirely with a Keatsian version of the story of Glaucus and Scylla. Keats is ingenious in welding it into Endymion's travels, yet, by its style, it remains apart. For Bailey and Oxford are having their effect. We hear no more of the moon, and the sea ceases to flash with authentic observation; it turns literary in vision and expression. We can perfectly see why. Oxford is not a place that can go unremarked, but no excuse could be found for Oxford in the depths of the ocean. It obliterated the sea as present vision, and gave nothing which could be util-

ized as such. Because of this, Keats is thrown back upon association, literary association. The interminable literary discussions between the two friends, which Bailey has taken pains to preserve, turned Keats's mind even more toward books than it usually was, if that were possible. Bailey was the last man to become excited over the moon. By Bailey's count of lines, it took just four days to wean Keats away from her. Tale within tale was already quite the habit of the poem, but not before had Keats dwelt so long upon an interpolated story. Bailey could perfectly sympathize with Glaucus, particularly in the manner in which Keats, sitting in Bailey's study in Magdalen Hall with Bailey at his elbow, presented it. Even as it was, Bailey had some qualms, as we see in a letter written to Taylor on August twenty-ninth, 1818.[1] In this letter, he says he cannot defend the moral part of the poem:

> "There are two great blotches in it in this respect. The first must offend anyone of proper feelings; and indelicacy is not to be borne; and I greatly reproach myself that I did not represent this very strongly to him before it went to the press — not that I apprehend that it would have had any great effect; but it would have been some self-satisfaction. The second book, however, was concluded before I knew Keats. The second fault I allude to I think we have noticed. The approaching inclination it has to that abominable principle of Shelley! — that sensual love is the principle of things. Of this I believe him to be unconscious, & can see how by process of imagination he might arrive at so false, delusive & dangerous conclusion."

From this we notice how little Bailey had understood Keats's explanation of his theme in *Endymion* in the letter sent from Burford Bridge on November twenty-second, 1817.[2] This letter to Taylor hardly does Bailey complete justice, however, for, in other letters, he says that he greatly admires the Second Book, and we know that he

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.
[2] See Vol. I, p. 360.

defended *Endymion* with loyalty and asperity; but it does show the bent of his mind, and in such close association as he and Keats were during Keats's Oxford visit this bent naturally had some effect upon Keats. That Bailey did have a great effect upon Keats, we shall see presently. At the moment, it is only necessary to observe this influence in the abrupt alteration of subject and manner which occurs at line 187 of Book III.

How completely in sympathy Bailey was with Keats's new method, can be seen by the fact that, thirty years after the event, Bailey's recollection of Keats's reading of a passage at the beginning of the Glaucus story is still quite fresh. He says:

> [1] "I remember very distinctly, though at this distance of time, his reading of a few passages; and I almost think I hear his voice, and see his countenance. Most vivid is my recollection of the following passage of the fine and affecting story of the old man, Glaucus, which he read to me immediately after its composition: —
>
> 'The old man raised his hoary head and saw
> The wilder'd stranger — seeming not to see,
> The features were so lifeless. Suddenly
> He woke as from a trance; his snow-white brows
> Went arching up, *and like two magic ploughs*
> *Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,*
> *Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,*
> *Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.*'
>
> The lines I have italicised are those which then struck me as peculiarly fine, and to my memory have 'kept as fixedly as rocky marge.' I remember his upward look when he read of the 'magic ploughs,' which in his hands have turned up much of the rich soil of Fairyland."

That Bailey liked this passage, stamps Bailey. For it is very poor, imitative stuff. If Keats liked it, he was fooled by the heat of creation. It is quite usual for creative

[1] Bailey Memoranda. Colvin.

writers to be particularly pleased in the beginning with work which they afterwards see is bad. What strikes most at first, frequently turns out to be feckless. Did Keats continue to like this passage? It would be interesting to know. Eyebrows in the semblance of magic ploughs wrinkling a forehead is a detestable simile, for ploughs connote cutting. "Arching up" is a steal from Sandys and none the less good on that account, but the mixed metaphors at the end are Keats's own. We have the ploughs furrowing the forehead, which remains as fixed as a "rocky marge." But how can even a magic plough draw a furrow through rock? And, if we grant that the forehead may have undergone petrifaction after the furrowing was done, still what has it to do with a marge? Why the word "marge," which is decidedly out of place? There are many pertinent things that could be rocky, but marge means margin, an edge, and to liken a forehead to an edge in any material is far-fetched indeed. It looks as if the only reason for "marge" is that it rhymes with "large." Then the lips round which "had gone" a smile. Now "had gone" distinctly suggests movement and progression. Try as we will, we cannot help seeing the smile begin at one end of the lips and steal stealthily round them until it reaches its starting place, a very strange way for a smile to behave. I have said that this is imitation, and so it is; but it is spurious imitation, brummagem instead of ore. If Keats's models had done no better than that, he would not have read a line of them and neither would anybody else.

This quotation has a little outdistanced the place at which we left the poem. To return, Glaucus is described and his cloak, which, as we have seen, Keats paraphrased from Drayton, and did so with a skill that makes the passage admired of Bailey following immediately upon it the more amazing in its ineptitude.

Glaucus hails Endymion with the solemn announcement: "Thou art the man!" Now, he says, he will regain

his lost youth, his life will be changed, and much more to the same purport. Endymion is somewhat taken aback by this. He sees himself sacrificed in a hundred dreadful ways. But Glaucus weeps, and Endymion finds him no longer sinister, only pitiful, and kneeling down begs forgiveness with tears. Glaucus reassures him, and tells him he knows he loves "an unknown power," that he, Glaucus, is a friend to love and that Endymion has been

> ". . . Commission'd to this fated spot
> For great enfranchisement."

After this, the two move on together. As they walk, Glaucus tells his story, and here Keats follows Ovid's version, merely dressing it up with a few pictorial touches, but these are so far beneath what Keats could do in this line when he was in the vein that they are not memorable. Having sketched his early life, Glaucus relates how he plunged into the sea. Keats departs from Ovid in this by making Glaucus's reason for this desperate act a desire to have, what we may call, the "freedom of the ocean." Keats suppresses the herb by means of which Glaucus is suddenly cast into the sea, also there is no suggestion that Glaucus has changed into a sea creature. He returns to Ovid, however, in the meeting of Glaucus with Scylla, but generalizes it, whereby it loses its vividness and zest. The diction of this part of the tale is not only cold and unillumined by the flashes of verisimilitude by means of which Keats usually keeps his narrative fresh and clear, it descends to such cheerless banalities as, when Glaucus decides to invoke Circe's help:

> ". . . So above the water
> I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus' daughter."

This time it is Glaucus who sleeps, and we may wonder that Keats allowed himself to use this same device so many times in one poem. His invention during the writing of

this part of *Endymion* lags badly. Circe's arrival on the scene of Glaucus's narrative is not so different from Diana's many arrivals, only not so good as any of them. Circe is of a "coming-on" disposition. She tells how she has wept thinking Glaucus dead, and she tells this in a manner almost worthy of Pope, if Keats had stopped to think of it, for she has shed "an urn of tears," and, now that Glaucus is alive, she assures him that she

> ". . . will pour
> From these devoted eyes their silver store."

To give an idea of the irresistible *allure* of her speech, Keats informs us that

> ". . . she link'd
> Her charming syllables."

Poor Keats! Poetry is not written at a table sitting opposite another man who is cramming for an examination. The best that can be done under such circumstances is verse, and there is abundance of mere verse in this Third Book.

Let us realize, nevertheless, that there was a reason for this drop in the poetic temperature quite apart from Bailey's ill-advised taste. Whatever Bailey may have been on the poetical side, he was a scholar; and Keats was not simply a poet, but a man of very keen intellect with only a mediocre education. He positively gulped down Bailey's conversation. He could not have enough of this new point of view. It took him clean out of the *Endymion* mood. His thinking faculty was growing up at a great rate. All sorts of ideas were knocking at his perception; he wanted, and needed, to give way to them, but he had to get on with *Endymion*. The best he could do with it was to retell a tale he knew by heart with only a minimum of change in it, just enough to fit it into his frame. His imagination was taken up with other things. His state of

mind was a good deal like that of a sleepy man who tries to keep himself at a task; but, in Keats's case, instead of the clouding over of the mind by sleep, it was the sweeping over it of a host of new impressions. He kept on writing, but only half his faculties were on the job. It must have been at just about this time, calculating by his fifty lines, that he wrote to his sister Fanny, on September tenth:

> "I have been writing very hard lately, even till an utter incapacity came on, and I feel it now about my head."

Had he been wise, he would have left *Endymion* alone until he felt like going on with it, but I suspect he had an inkling that if he stopped for a day that would be the end of the poem altogether. Keats was a man of character and he would not be beaten.

In taking up the thread of the Glaucus episode, we shall lose nothing if we hurry over this part of the tale and let "billows rude" and "haunts umbrageous" and "antler'd deer" sufficiently suggest how it is told.

Unlike Ovid, Keats permits Glaucus to succumb to Circe's blandishments, but one day he finds her torturing her crew of animals, men made such by her enchantments. He flees in horror and hides in a wood, only to be found after three days by Circe, and Keats rises to something like force in the witch's speech of bitter invective in which she curses Glaucus and sets a spell upon him. He is to return to the ocean and take on the appearance of a feeble old man. This shape he must keep for a thousand years without dying; at the end of that time, he will be allowed to die if fate so decrees.

Having cast her spell, Circe disappears, in as perfect a simile as Keats ever invented. But it must be given in its context. The dramatic irony of her last words is admirably conceived, for, after cursing Glaucus in a sort of hideous glee, dwelling on the miseries which he will undergo, she bids him good-bye with a refinement of brutal savagery

quite in keeping with her nature. To gain the full effect of this climax and the simile which follows it, we must go back a few lines and quote the end of Circe's curse as Glaucus recounts it to Endymion:

> " 'Disabled age shall seize thee; and even then
> Thou shalt not go the way of aged men;
> But live and wither, cripple and still breathe
> Ten hundred years: which gone, I then bequeath
> Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.
> Adieu, sweet love, adieu!' — As shot stars fall,
> She fled ere I could groan for mercy."

These lines prove succinctly that Keats is regaining his equilibrium. He is more in the poem in this curse of Circe's than he has been since Glaucus came on the scene, except in the single instance of the description of Glaucus's cloak. From now on, Keats, to a great extent, returns to his own natural manner.

What delivered him from books and Bailey, from Oxford and conversation? What gave him back himself? Nothing more startling than that first impressions were wearing off, I think. Like all men of extreme sensibility, Keats was extraordinarily quick to receive impressions, and be imposed upon by them; but again, like all powerful creative minds, he was equally sudden in returning to himself. No outside influence could keep its ascendancy long, none could turn him for more than a moment from his path. He took them up, assimilated what he needed of them, and discarded the rest. Witness his delight in mountain scenery at the beginning of his Scotch tour, and his admission to his brother Tom at the end of it that he has seen enough. It took him scarcely an instant, as life goes, to gather in mountains, rocks, and waterfalls, and store them up for possible use; as to these objects in actual fact, he was soon through with them. So here in Oxford. He had been completely bowled over by his impressions at

first, he could not even write like himself. But ten days sufficed to dull the sharpness of their appeal. Not that they held no farther interest for him. Bailey's conversation had not lost its charm, and we know by his letters for a twelvemonth to come how much he relied upon Bailey's character and Bailey's judgment. But it is evident by the renewed vigour in this part of Book III that his creative faculty was beginning to dominate him again. The end of the Third Book is far better than the middle. From line 187 to line 555 the poem is principally filling space, as we have seen.

While Glaucus, having regained his element, the sea, and not yet feeling the effects of Circe's curse, is swimming, he comes upon the dead body of Scylla. Then, indeed, does he realize the full extent of Circe's wrath. It is noteworthy how Keats leaves Ovid from this point on. With his returning submergence in the poem, he begins to invent for himself, and the mere act of invention seems to bring with it his own personal diction. I have already remarked how seldom Keats employs the grotesque. Harsh and violent things always seem to repel him. There is a sort of wild power from which he seems to turn voluntarily away. He liked smooth edges and soft surfaces, if one can so put it without any intention of meaning the terms literally. He thought Haydon the greatest of living painters, even before he knew him, but never once does he mention Turner; he must have read Blake, the *Daisy's Song* is so close to Blake's manner in the *Songs of Innocence*, but there is no evidence to show that he ever read Blake's symbolic books, although Dilke was a Blake collector. Possibly Dilke did not begin his collection until after Keats's death, but it is more than likely that he knew of the prophetic books, and, if he did, undoubtedly Keats did too. In changing the horrible fate allotted to Scylla by Ovid, Keats may have merely had the interests of his story in mind, but it also seems likely that the loath-

some horror of a woman with her lower extremities turned into dogs disgusted him. Far otherwise is the fate of Scylla in his version, and from now on there is no question of Ovid.

Glaucus carries the beautiful dead body of his former love to a grotto

> "Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl."

We need no plainer evidence of Keats's return to himself than the way in which Glaucus tells how

> "Headlong I darted; at one eager swirl
> Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold!
> 'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold."

He leaves the body in a niche and flees; but, even as he goes, his fate comes upon him, and

> ". . . these limbs became
> Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame."

As Oxford grew familiar through daily association, Keats began to think again of the sea. In a letter to Jane Reynolds, written on the fourteenth of September, a perfectly healthy letter of fun and fancy, Keats, moved thereto by the fact that his correspondent is at the seaside village of Little Hampton, speaks of the profound effect which the sea has upon him:

> [1] "I have found in the ocean's music, — varying (though self-same) more than the passion of Timotheus, an enjoyment not to be put into words; and 'though inland far I be,' I now hear the voice most audibly while pleasing myself in the idea of your sensations . . . But don't you think there is something extremely fine after sunset, when there are a few white clouds about and a few stars blinking — when the waters are ebbing, and the horizon a mystery? This state of things has been so fulfilling to me that I am anxious to know whether it is a favourite with you."

[1] Corrected from the original letter. Author's Collection.

By the inevitable calculation of lines, this seems to have been written a day or so before the Circe speech; and now, as Glaucus, skipping quickly over the passage of some hundreds of years, begins to tell of a shipwreck, all at once, for the first time after reaching Oxford, Keats writes again realistically and naturally of the sea.

Glaucus begins the story in this manner:

> "... On a day,
> Sitting upon a rock above the spray,
> I saw grow up from the horizon's brink
> A gallant vessel: soon she seem'd to sink
> Away from me again, as though her course
> Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force —
> So vanish'd."

That is clearly remembered experience, so brightly imagined that the words are inevitable, suddenly they are there. No one who has watched a ship rise slowly out of the ocean from masthead to hull can fail to appreciate the perfect realism of "grow up from the horizon's brink." She comes, she goes, *sinking* down and disappearing. The rest of the shipwreck is good, but not so good as this.

The vessel gone down and the crew lost with it, Glaucus sits mournfully regarding from his rock the now empty ocean. All at once, through the water beneath him, there rises the hand of an old man holding a scroll and a wand. Glaucus reaches down and seizes the hand, trying to pull it farther up the rock, but the body below is too heavy, and the hand tears from his grasp and sinks, leaving the scroll and wand with Glaucus. This scroll, when Glaucus opens it, appears to refer to him. It tells of a poor, bewitched wretch dwelling in the sea, whose doom it is to live for a thousand years and then die alone. But yet, it says, he shall not die, if he will learn "the meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds," and explore them to "their symbol-essences." Besides this, he must salvage the bodies of all

drowned lovers and lay them side by side until, at a given time, a youth shall appear whom

> ". . . he shall direct
> How to consummate all."

The youth chosen must do this thing, or both he and Glaucus will be destroyed.

Endymion cheerfully accepts this unrevealed destiny, and Glaucus leads him to the grotto where he sees thousands of dead lovers laid in rows and reverently cared for.

Glaucus wishes to fulfill the decree at once, and starts by tearing up the scroll. He then takes off his cloak and binds it round Endymion, after which he strikes the air with his wand nine times. Glaucus next gives Endymion a thread as fragile as a spider's web and bids him wind it "to a clue," whatever that may be; I fear that once again Keats was governed in his choice of word by the need of a rhyme. Endymion next receives a shell on which he is told that something is written, although Glaucus says it is "pearly blank" to him. Endymion apparently deciphers the writing, for Glaucus is overjoyed and declares that they are safe. He next commands Endymion to break the wand against a lyre which is standing on a pedestal. The wand broken, music gushes about them, and Glaucus, reaching the final charm, orders Endymion to strew upon him some of the leaves of the torn scroll. No sooner have the "minced leaves" touched Glaucus's face than he stands transformed. Age has dropped from him, he is a young man crowned with a coral diadem — a youthful god, in fact. Glaucus, the altered Glaucus, at once turns to the corpse of Scylla, which he touches, weeping. Scylla sighs, and revives. One by one, Endymion, following the directions of Glaucus, resuscitates the other dead lovers by strewing upon them the remaining leaves of the scroll. When all are risen up, Glaucus shouts that they must away to pay their respects to Neptune. Out of the grotto

they rush, "pouring" down the marble steps "as easily as hour-glass sand," and on emerging behold another multitude coming to greet them. These are the mates of those lovers who have suffered the misfortune of drowning while separated from their loves. The joined hosts move on to Neptune's palace.

The similarity of these episodes to many in the *Arabian Nights* has often been pointed out. A hand rising from the sea, holding something of huge importance, is a very common occurrence in Arabian and Persian tales. But we need not go so far to seek it, if we remember King Arthur and the way in which he received his sword, "Excalibur." The whole rigmarole of the rites performed in the grotto is familiar to any reader of folk-tales in any language. Usually it is some enchanted liquid which is sprinkled to wake the dead to life; but, as a liquid in a liquid realm seems to lose its significance, Keats has happily substituted fragments of the scroll. There is very little originality in this whole episode, as far as the facts of it are concerned. Keats is content to take various old charms and ceremonies which he finds lying round in his brain from his multifarious readings. I think it futile to seek their sources, for I doubt if Keats remembered them himself. He gets a bit here, a bit there, he even goes back to Ovid for the number of times that Glaucus beats the air with his wand. But it is important to notice that the scene is told in Keats's own idiom, that curious idiom, so packed with quotations, and so completely personal in spite of them. It is not his idiom at its best, but it is better than he had been doing before the passage where Circe curses Glaucus. Small wonder, therefore, that he was pleased with it. And he was. It — the poem — marched, as the French say. On September twenty-first, he writes to Reynolds in high enthusiasm:

> "I am getting on famous with my third Book, — have written 800 lines thereof, and hope to finish it next Week. Bailey likes what I have done very much. Believe me, my

dear Reynolds, one of my chief layings-up is the pleasure I shall have in showing it to you, I may now say, in a few days."

Eight hundred lines carries the poem to the moment when all the lovers have come to life and are just quitting the grotto. It should be remembered that Keats speaks according to his own numbering of lines. As I have already pointed out,[1] Buxton Forman numbers the lines differently from the numbering of the first edition.

Nothing could have been more unwise than Keats's determination to make every Book consist of a thousand lines. He stuck to it, or nearly so. By his own count of lines, the First Book has 993; the Second, 1026; the Third, 1043; and the Fourth, 1020. This is a remarkable evidence of holding to a principle, but he injured his poem in so doing. Now here, at the eight hundredth line, the story of his Third Book was ended, or rather, a few lines only were needed to end it, by no means the two hundred that his scheme demanded. He fell back upon fancy, sheer fancy, to supply the want of logical action.

We are taken to Neptune's palace, which is described in much the same style as the underground descriptions in Book II. The account of the palace is good, but the analogous parts of Book II are better. Yet some of his imaginings are very striking, as, for instance, this, in Neptune's Hall, where

> ". . . there did spring
> From natural west, and east, and south, and north,
> A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
> A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head."

After the description of the palace, which takes up fifty lines, the action of the story starts again. Triton blows his horn, the Nereids dance, the Sirens sing, and Venus,

[1] See Vol. I, pp. 322–323.

"the ooze-born Goddess," enters upon the scene. She appears surprised that Endymion is "still wandering in the bands of love," for, she tells him

> ". . . Since the hour
> I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power
> Have I put forth to serve thee."

She had expected that already he would have "escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net." But she counsels patience and tells him that it will not be long now. Very prettily she comforts him, a nice touch on Keats's part:

> ". . . Pr'ythee soon,
> Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,
> Visit now my Cythera."

The last line of the above reads, in both the finished manuscript and the first edition, "Visit my Cytherea." But the draft has the reading I have printed, and Buxton Forman and Professor de Sélincourt have adopted it, since the island is correctly spelt "Cythera." Buxton Forman even believes that the spelling in the printer's copy is an error of transcription. I do not think so; I think the change was intentional owing to the greater beauty of sound in "Cytherea." One of the many names given to Venus was Cytherea, as Keats knew, since he speaks of Venus as "goddess Cytherea" in the *Hymn to Neptune* a little farther on. Knowing the name to be derived from the island, he evidently confused the difference between the spellings and supposed them interchangeable.

A "glorious revelry" begins, and some of the description so nicely illustrates one of Keats's marked characteristics that it will be well to pause and consider it. I refer to his habit of borrowing other poets' words and even, at times, other poets' contexts. In this instance, the last is more by implication than actual fact, but the suggestion of Keats's lines is evidently the outcome of his reading of the follow-

ing passage of Shakespeare. In the first scene of the Third Act of *Much Ado About Nothing*, he found:

> "And bid her steal into the pleached bower
> Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
> Forbid the sun to enter . . .
> . . . . .
> So angle me for Beatrice, who even now
> Is couched in the woodbine coverture."

Here two words and a connotation give him a pregnant scene for his revelry:

> "And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd
> New growth about each shell and pendant lyre;
> The which, in disentangling for their fire,
> Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture
> For dainty toying."

A hymn strikes up. This *Hymn to Neptune* is evidently modelled upon the *Hymn to Pan* in the First Book; it reproduces the short line, and even attempts to vary it with the same sure rhythmic felicity. But nothing of the inevitable excellence of the *Hymn to Pan* is here. This is a faded effort to regain a lost emotion. Keats cannot work himself up, the *Hymn* is a dead thing throughout. Endymion begins to feel dizzy, the palace whirls about him. He calls on Venus for help, asks where his unknown goddess is, and falls at Neptune's feet insensible. Keats's custom of rendering his hero unconscious whenever some important event is about to happen, has been remarked upon before. Apparently Keats's dramatic sense could think of no other method of bringing about an alteration of scene or emotion, for he employs it in either instance.

As Endymion is carried away, he hears in his mind a well-known voice reassuring him:

> "Dearest Endymion! my entire love!
> How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done —

> Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.
> Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch
> Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch
> Thee into endless heaven. Awake! Awake!"

Endymion regains consciousness, and as he does so "a placid lake" comes "quiet to his eyes." An expression better than this to express his slowly growing sense that he is looking at a lake can scarcely be imagined. It is perfect realism; it is also perfect poetry. A forest spreads about him, and in its freshness, and the realization that he is once more upon the earth, he tastes a comforting happiness, and the Third Book closes.

Opposite the last line in the draft, Keats wrote: "Oxf: Sept. 26." This date proves how very accurate Bailey was in his recollection that Keats wrote fifty lines a day, for the whole 1043 lines (Keats's reckoning) were done in twenty-one days. But the last two hundred and forty-three lines had exhausted him. They were a *tour de force*, and although some of them are very good, two hundred of them at least could have been dispensed with. He is no longer in the triumphant mood of his letter to Reynolds of the previous week, when, on September twenty-eighth, he writes to Haydon:

> "You will be glad to hear that within the last three weeks I have written 1000 lines — which are the Third Book of my Poem. My Ideas with respect to it I assure you are very low — and I would write the subject thoroughly again — but I am tired of it and think the time would be better spent in writing a new Romance which I have in my eye for next summer — Rome was not built in a Day — and all the good I expect from my employment this summer is the fruit of Experience which I hope to gather in my next Poem."

He had finished the Third Book two days before this letter was written, and two days is ample time to gain a

perspective. Also, the experience he hoped to gather was already partly his, and its effect was to ruin his pleasure in what he had done. He went too far, of course; to his weary and disappointed mind, the First and Second Books went down with the Third. His discouragement was largely due to strain and overwork, no doubt; he had been keyed up to an unnatural pitch, now the reaction had set in. But beneath the strain and the reaction lay experience. Keats did not merely feel — he knew; and he never ceased to know afterwards. Although he regained some measure of self-approbation over his work in the poem later, he is never quite so exuberant about it again. He had not our knowledge of what was to come, and what an immense amount the writing of *Endymion* had taught him. He lingered on at Oxford for a week or ten days after finishing the Third Book, during which time he and Bailey went on an excursion to Stratford-on-Avon, but, with excellent sense, he made no attempt to begin the Fourth.

The Third Book has been so completely analyzed already that no particular summing up seems necessary. To lovers of Keats's most personal and unique type of poetry, it offers less than the rest of the poem. The moon passages are its greatest allurement. The story of Glaucus interpolated into the narrative of Endymion's quest irritates a reader who has begun to take a real interest, not only in what we may call the plot of the poem, but in Endymion himself as an individual. There is not the slightest hint of psychology in the Third Book. Humanity gives way to ancient legend, told with very little inspiration and a minimum of originality. Because this interpolation never quite justifies itself, commentators have beaten their brains to find the reason for its intrusion. I am profoundly certain that there is none other than I have stated.

The usual explanation for poetry, any poetry, is far less complex than most people think. Consider the Browning

societies, and how they have tangled a very simple meaning. Keats has escaped the societies, but he has not escaped the lucubrations of critics. It were well to ponder him a while as he was and not as he might have been, only so shall we avoid building up a man who never existed. Allegories have been, and will be, written, poems have been devised on the principle of cipher writing, but not by boys of twenty-one, in love with the sensuous in nature and letters, and who make no secret of their predilections. He who runs may read, if he will look about him and not bury his nose in a theory, as is the common way.

Sir Sidney Colvin's ingenious key to the story of Glaucus, after Keats's departure from the myth related by Ovid, would be worth more consideration if the action were not that of hundreds of legends in every language. Expiation for some fault or misfortune by the performance of a noble and difficult deed is mere stock in trade with all such tales. It was an obvious ending to the story, since Keats did not find himself disposed to adopt Ovid's far more original ending. I cannot, therefore, see any reason for supposing Keats to have given it an altruistic undercurrent, and this opinion I firmly hold to after many readings of the poem and much study of Keats's statements in his letters, and those of his friends, on the subject of *Endymion*. The prevalence of Ovid in this Third Book, beginning with the introduction of the Glaucus episode, not only in the story itself, but in innumerable details drawn from other parts of the *Metamorphoses* to which I have had no space to allude — a prevalence far greater than we see in any of the other Books — leads to the supposition that Keats, already familiar with Sandys' translation, came across it while ferreting among Bailey's books and read it over again, then and there.

## Book IV.

We know that Keats did not begin the Fourth Book

until after his return to Hampstead, because he writes to Bailey from there some time in October as follows:

> "I don't suppose I've written as many lines as you have read volumes, or at least chapters, since I last saw you. However, I am in a fair way now to come to a conclusion in at least three weeks, when I assure you I shall be glad to dismount for a month or two; although I'll keep as tight a rein as possible till then, nor suffer myself to sleep. I will copy for you the opening of the Fourth Book, in which you will see from the manner I had not an opportunity of mentioning any poets, for fear of spoiling the effect of the passage by particularizing them."

Here we observe several things. In the first place, that the poem has been going very slowly. No fifty lines a day now. Keats's first letter to Bailey after leaving Oxford, in which he tells of his return journey, was written on October eighth. In this second letter, Keats says that he has been confined a fortnight or more at Hampstead, so we can safely say that it was not begun before October twenty-second, and a full fortnight is a tolerable length of time in which to have written only a few lines. The letter from which I have quoted is undated, but Buxton Forman considers it to have been written in November, and puts it before another letter to Bailey post-marked November fifth. I think he may be right as to the second half of the letter, but Keats, in the second paragraph, began the letter afresh, a fact which Buxton Forman did not know. I shall state the source of my knowledge later. Keats had done much more than the introduction by the time the second paragraph was written. In the second place, we see that the introduction to Book IV had been talked over with Bailey. Bailey's was the mind of a scholar, and evidently the introduction as planned was to be a nutshell history of the progress of poetry from the earliest times, enriched by lists of poets ancient and modern. Keats came back from Oxford thoroughly tired,

and more in the mood for gadding than for writing. He was, moreover, ill and discouraged. Pondering upon this introduction, with no enthusiastic Bailey at his elbow, he becomes less and less enamoured of it. He writes it, as agreed, probably because he could think of nothing better, but shortens it to a mere twenty-nine lines; it is the shortest introduction in the poem. Sensible of the disappointment which Bailey was sure to feel, Keats explains, qualifies, almost apologizes, and apparently sends off only the introduction, which we know was not all that he had written of the Fourth Book when he posted the letter; but, with the introduction, Bailey and Ovid both vanish from the poem. Evidently Keats had either refreshed his memory with a re-reading of *Endimion and Phœbe* or had been keeping the episode of Diana in mortal guise all along as matter for his last Book.

We need not greatly trouble ourselves with this introduction; it is forced, obscure, and uninteresting. Woodhouse notes that line 10 refers to Hebrew poetry, line 11 to Greek poetry, and line 15 to Roman poetry. But so vague and florid are these allusions, that even so staunch an admirer as Buxton Forman is moved to remark: "The references to the Hebrew, Greek, Roman, and Italian literatures are scarcely as clear and pointed as might have been expected from Keats."

The gist of the introduction is that, during the times of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, there was no English poetry, England being still in a state of barbarism. Yet her turn came, and her poetry, after long delaying, burst out in great magnificence. Now, however, the great days of English poetry are over; the poets of the present cannot compare with their predecessors. They are crushed, confined, and fretted, a prey to despondence; they lead "dull, uninspir'd, snail-paced lives." Keats refers to various of his poems, notably to his *Epistle to my brother George*, and also to the introduction to *Sleep and Poetry*, in the lines:

"Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,
And could not pray: — nor could I now — so on
I move to the end in lowliness of heart."

One cannot help pitying the boy, so out of love with his poem and himself, and yet so rigidly determined to finish it, willy-nilly.

The introduction ends with the lines just quoted, and Keats begins his Fourth Book by plunging at once into a scene without a beginning. A voice is speaking — a woman's voice, lamenting that she has ever left her native land, which, as she mentions the Ganges, we perceive must be India. She bewails her solitary lot and tells how she thirsts for love. This passage lacks the passionate zest of the earlier love speeches; it shows poverty of emotion, a writing from the brain and not from the heart; it is not felt, only thought. Keats is clearly not in cue.

A sort of invocation to Endymion follows, in which he is advised to "vanish into air" rather than observe the maiden's charms, for, says the poet, "Is Phœbe passionless?" But if he must look, behold the maiden!

The voice continues its plaint, begging for love:

"Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,
And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
There is no lightning, no authentic dew
But in the eye of love: . . .

. . .

. . . there's not a breath
Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
Of passion from the heart."

Keats is trying, desperately trying, to bring back the mood of his First and Second Books. It will be remembered that never once throughout the Glaucus story has he been tempted to speak his own sentiments through the mouth of his characters. The First and Second Books are quite

as much Keats as Endymion, but in the Glaucus episode Keats is the writer, not the partaker. Suddenly, here, we have Keats again, crying out for his lost interest in his poem — and, a little, in his life too at the moment — with the voice of the Indian maiden. The Glaucus mood is not to end the poem, that is positive; Keats knows, with a rightness of judgment he had not been capable of at Oxford, that he must get back to a sensuous presentation of his story or the whole poem will lose its point and no one will be less pleased with it than he. But still he feels nothing, he only hopes that feeling will come as he goes on.

Endymion, with an immediacy which Keats must have envied, falls in love at once. But this is not, in his case, a matter of rejoicing, for he is ashamed at his own fickleness. He has become reconciled to loving the moon and his unknown goddess at the same time, soothing his soul by considering that, in the case of Diana, his love can be translated as worship. Now here he goes and falls in love with a mortal, which cannot be translated into anything; it is, and he sees it, sheer betrayal. His bewildered mind takes stock of the event accurately enough, and Keats infuses into Endymion's words a considerable degree of surprised, and rather horrified, passion:

> "Goddess! I love thee not the less: from thee
> By Juno's smile I turn not — no, no, no —
> While the great waters are at ebb and flow. —
> I have a triple soul! O fond pretence —
> For both, for both my love is so immense
> I feel my heart is cut in twain for them.
>
> And so he groaned as one by beauty slain."

One can perfectly understand why Keats sent Bailey only the introduction.

With what I consider an unwarrantable high-handedness, Buxton Forman, followed by Professor de Sélincourt, has altered the next to last line of the above quotation. In

both the corrected printer's copy and the first edition the line is as I have given it, and rhymeless. Although this is probably another instance of Keats's carelessness, I do not think Buxton Forman's excuse that he found his altered reading, "I feel my heart is cut for them in twain," written in pencil on the margin of the manuscript, a valid reason for adopting it. Keats was not in the habit of correcting his manuscripts with a pencil. I think it far more probable that Woodhouse, who loved to tinker with what he considered infelicities in Keats's poems (witness his rewriting of the last stanza of *In Drear-Nighted December*[1]), is responsible, or even some other friend or later owner. If editors permit themselves such liberties, the result must be a series of garbled texts, of no use to students and thoroughly misleading to general readers. An author's text should be inviolate, and secure from the tampering of no matter how well-meaning an editor.

Endymion's struggle with himself does not last long. A moment more and he springs out of his hiding-place, and with startling abruptness tells the maiden that she has stolen

> ". . . the wings wherewith
> I was to top the heavens."

That she is his executioner, since he feels that love and hate, misery and happiness, will "in a few short hours" be nothing to him, that his whole story will be simply that passion has slain him. Amusingly colloquial is his prayer for favour:

> "Do smile upon the evening of my days."

The maiden, even while weeping, does not fail to encourage him, very prettily, and very certainly. She asks, and answers herself:

[1] See Vol. I, p. 534.

"Why must such desolation betide
As that thou speakest of? Are not these green nooks
Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks
Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales? —
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
Will slime the rose to-night. Though if thou wilt,
Methinks 'twould be a guilt — a very guilt —
Not to companion thee, and sigh away
The light — the dusk — the dark — till break of day."

We should, in passing, note the pregnant condensation of the last line.

Endymion, so urged, immediately declares that he loves her, and that his "days will never last." But, as he is surely about to die, he implores her to speak to him that he may have music in dying, he desires no greater happiness. Then, for a reason which appears to be simply that Keats wants an excuse for the song which follows, Endymion asks the maiden if she had not spoken of India. She replies to this opening with the long song known as the *Ode to Sorrow*, or the *Indian Maiden's Song*. This song is so important, both as poetry and for the many discussions as to its sources, that I must digress from the story a moment to consider it.

In the first place, when was it written? We cannot say exactly, but it was certainly written at Hampstead, since we know that Keats lacked only five hundred lines to complete his poem when he went to Burford Bridge, and, according to the numbering of lines in the first edition, the song begins on line 143. There is also proof in a letter to Jane Reynolds which, as it has never before to my knowledge been published, I will give in full:[1]

"My dear Jane,

When I got home the other night there was a letter from Bailey — and so very kind a one after all my indolence

[1] From a transcript of the original holograph in the Day Collection.

that I felt a very repentence — and finished my letter to him immediately. I hope you are getting well quite fast. I send you a few lines from my fourth Book with the desire of helping away for you five minutes of the day —

O Sorrow
Why dost borrow
The natural ~~line~~ hue of health from vermeil lips?

To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes?
Or ist thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

O Sorrow
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a Lover's eye?

To give the glow worm light?
Or on a moonless night
To tinge on syren shores the salt sea spray?

O Sorrow
Why dost borrow
The mellow dities from a mourning tongue?
To giv't at evening pale
Unto the nightingale
That thou may'st listen the cold dews among?
O Sorrow
Why dost borrow
Hearts lightness from the merriment of May
A lover could not [1] [tread]
A cowslip on the head,
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day —
drooping
Nor any ~~sacred~~ flower
Held sacred for thy bower
Wherever he may sport himself and play.
To Sorrow

[1] In the transcript, the next word is omitted. The published version puts the word "tread" at the end of the line.

I bad good morrow
And thought to leave her far away behind
But cheerly cheerly
She loves me dearly —
She is to me so constant and so kind
I would deceive her
And so leave her
But ah! She is too constant and too kind!

Give our love to Marianne

Yours sincerely
JOHN KEATS."

This letter has neither date nor address, but nevertheless it can be timed with some accuracy. That it was written from Hampstead is certain, as Keats sends "our love," which means his and his brothers', they were, therefore, all together when the letter was written, and, by the twenty-second of November, Keats was at Burford Bridge and his brothers on the point of leaving for Devonshire. Then he says that he has received a letter from Bailey so kind that he finished his own letter to him immediately, and we may be fairly sure that the letter he finished was the one in which he enclosed the introduction to the Fourth Book, as, shortly after speaking of the introduction, he begins a new paragraph by saying, "Thus far had I written when I received your last." How long the letter had been waiting to be finished, we cannot, of course, tell. I think it not unlikely that a week or more elapsed between the two parts of it, which would date this letter to Jane Reynolds as written, probably, during the first week of November. Two additional proofs of this are to be found at the end of the letter to Bailey, for Keats says: "You must forgive, although I have only written three hundred lines; they would have been five, but I have been obliged to go to town," and again: "Yesterday I called at Lamb's." Lamb's is Lamb's Conduit Street, where the Reynoldses

lived, and Keats goes on to speak of Jane Reynolds. This last sentence shows clearly that the letter to Jane, where he speaks of the call as having taken place "the other night," was written a day or two after the finish of the letter to Bailey. That the three hundred lines refer to *Endymion* is certain, because the *Indian Maiden's Song* ends, according to Keats's count, on line 288. A bare three hundred lines, then, constituted all that he was able to do in the month after leaving Oxford.

Why did Keats send only the first part of the *Indian Maiden's Song* to Jane Reynolds? Because the whole was too long, or because he thought that the first part would be the one most liked by a young lady? Either supposition is plausible, both may have been true, yet there is another — that he composed the song in sections, and that he had not definitely decided to blend this section with the rest when he wrote his letter. The erased words seem to indicate that the part quoted was still in process of construction at this time. Internal evidence is in favour of a break just at this point, for the style of the song definitely changes here.

One would suppose, on first thoughts, that any consideration of the sources from which Keats got his inspiration for the second part of the song, the *Triumph of Bacchus*, was unnecessary, the legend in all its detail being so well known. True, on first thoughts, but second thoughts lead us a little farther. First and foremost among sources is, of course, Lemprière. Woodhouse, in his interleaved copy so often referred to, repeats the story almost word for word from Lemprière, merely abridging it. But Lemprière gives only the sheerest outline of the legend, naming, however, all the authors whom he has consulted. Now I do not for a moment imagine that Keats first determined to write of Bacchus, and then set to work to hunt the legend down through a score of volumes more or less difficult to obtain. That was not Keats's way. Something had to start him going, and succinct, meticulous Lem-

prière can hardly have done that. It is generally taken for granted that Ovid was responsible, and we know that Keats had been much occupied with Ovid during the writing of the Third Book; but there are certain things in Keats's lyric which he cannot have found in Ovid, because they are not there. Some of these lie buried in the pages of Rabelais, but only a few. Naturally we must allow Keats the full measure of his imagination; yet when we realize how often, how very often, the initial cause of his inspiration came from his reading, we cannot ignore suggestions apposite to his lines or points of view when we find them in books with which we know he was familiar. The case is altered, and its interest greatly augmented, when we find such suggestions in books which he might have read, but which we have no certain knowledge that he did read. Such a case exists in the *Historical Library* or Diodorus Siculus. Professor John Livingston Lowes first pointed it out to me, as he also did Keats's indebtedness to Rabelais in this connection. Unhappily, his detailed study of the matter[1] has not yet been published, nor have I seen it, but he has courteously permitted me to follow up his suggestions and print the resulting discoveries here. Another reason for thinking that Keats had read Diodorus, I will give in a later chapter, and we shall find still others when we come to consider the sonnet *To the Nile* and the *Ode to a Nightingale*, but, as these belong to a later period than that with which we are now dealing, I shall not touch upon them until they properly arrive. I do not wish to anticipate the chronological progression which I have adopted in telling the story of Keats's life. As I stated at the end of the last chapter, it has seemed best to treat of *Endymion* as a whole, even though, by so doing, I am obliged to outdistance events.

For the reasons which I have referred to, I believe, not only that Keats had read the *Historical Library*, but that

[1] A paper read before the Modern Language Association in December, 1922.

he had read it before he went to Oxford, and been much impressed by the descriptions of exotic countries contained in it. So much impressed, indeed as to resolve to make use of some of them whenever a suitable opening presented itself. If we grant that the episode of Diana wooing Endymion in mortal guise was kept on purpose for the last Book of the poem, we can understand why no trace of anything connected with that episode appears in the Third Book. Keats may have read Diodorus before, after, even during, the composition of the Third Book, but the plan of that book effectually excluded any reference to him.

Diodorus was not a difficult book to get in 1817. On the contrary, it was probably an extremely easy one. Keats, with his inveterate habit of borrowing, may have come across Booth's translation in the folio of 1699 at somebody's house, or he may have read it in the British Museum, since, as I have already said, we know that at some period of his life Haydon procured him a reader's ticket, but the folio is an unlikely possibility, principally because there is no need for it. So recently as 1814, there had appeared a reprint in two octavo volumes which could be bought anywhere. Keats may never have owned it himself — what he owned is the merest fraction of what he read — but again there were the handy collections of his friends, and Diodorus was the kind of book that Keats's set read. We talk about what Keats owned and did not own too much as though we knew the facts. It should never be forgotten that the list given in the Woodhouse volume of transcripts[1] was undoubtedly one made either just before, or just after, Keats's death, for purposes of identification of ownership and to tally lent copies. Keats not only borrowed and lent, he gave away books, and any complete list of his library from first to last would certainly show many more titles than are in the Woodhouse catalogue.

The first great question as regards the disguise Diana chose to assume is: Why an Indian maiden? Why India?

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

Nothing in *Endymion* hitherto had suggested India — for I believe Bacchus to be the result of India, not India of Bacchus. Diana owes the nationality of her impersonation, I am firmly convinced, to Diodorus. That work abounds in fascinating, apocryphal descriptions of India. According to the imaginative Sicilian, it is a land of enchantment. This mighty, fragrant, and impossible India had the advantage of presenting the poem with a new *mise en scène*; it opened possibilities which Keats only half realized at first; the very name of the place intrigued him, coloured over as it was with the marvellous pictures of Diodorus. An excellent place to languish for, indeed, viewing it through the old historian's eyes. (It is just possible that Diodorus, with his constant mention of Alexander, sent Keats's mind harking back to the little fragment he had written in the lecture room at St. Thomas's, and connotatively to Way's translation of Le Grand's *Fabliaux ou Contes* and his couplet on the Indian maid,[1] but I rather doubt it. It seems too remote.) After India, came Bacchus, though how he was to be brought in Keats did not at once see. Ovid does not emphasize India over the other lands which Bacchus belligerently and triumphantly marched through; Diodorus does, and so does Rabelais — but of that, later.

Now Diodorus gives three separate accounts of Bacchus, or rather, gives an account of the three separate heroes of that name. He is much more exhaustive than Ovid, even than Sandys' commentary on Ovid, and much more interesting. Keats takes the third Bacchus, the son of Jupiter and Semele, for his hero, but mixes him up with the first, who is really Osiris, as is commonly done.

Here is Diodorus, describing, not India in this particular passage, but a mythical island off the coast of Greece:

> "The first entrance into the island runs up a long vale, shaded all along with high and lofty trees, so thick, that

[1] See Vol. I, p. 89.

only a dim and glimmering light passes through; but the fiery beams of the sun enter not in the least to offend the passenger. In passing along, issue many sweet and crystal springs."

The *Triumph of Bacchus* begins:

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept, —
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lilly cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm trees by the river side?"

The scene is that of Diodorus, the "lofty trees" have turned into appropriate palms, often spoken of in the *Historical Library*, the "crystal springs" have widened into a river, the "glimmering light" has given the "shadowy wooer." But Diodorus is not uncompanioned in reminiscence in these two stanzas. There is a hint of *Lycidas* in the brimming lily cups, and more than a dash of Coleridge's peculiar touch of weird suggestion in the last three lines. We are irresistibly reminded of the "woman wailing for her demon lover" in *Kubla Khan*. Keats was reading Coleridge at just this time. In a letter addressed to "My dear Dilke, Mrs. Dilke, or Mr. Wm. Dilke" and dated "this Wednesday morning of Novr. 1817," he asks the loan of *Sibylline Leaves*. *Kubla Khan* was not in the *Sibylline Leaves* volume; it had been printed a year earlier, in 1816, in a little paper-covered pamphlet, together with *Christabel* and the *Pains of Sleep*, so that Keats was already familiar with it, he may even have owned it, certainly many of his friends did.

With the beginning of the third stanza, Diodorus comes markedly to the fore. It starts:

> "And as I sat, over the light blue hills
> There came a noise of revellers: the rills
> Into the wide stream came of purple hue —
> 'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
> The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
> From kissing cymbals made a merry din —"

The "light blue hills" might perfectly well be actual remembrance of a real scene, were it not for the fact that Keats had never been anywhere where he could have seen hills high enough to make a blue horizon. Margate, Hastings, the Isle of Wight, Oxford, Stratford-on-Avon, London and its suburbs — these were the only places he had been to before this Autumn of 1817, unless, indeed, the Lulworth Cove suggestion[1] be of any importance, in which case the coast of Dorsetshire and the road thereto should be added to the list. He had probably read of distant blue hills all his life, but he must have met them again in the Third Book of Diodorus where they are admirably sketched, although without absolute colour, in this passage:

> "This coast has very few harbours in it, by reason of the many vast mountains that lie all along as they sail; from whence is presented to the view such variety of colours, that they afford a most wonderful and delightful prospect to the passengers at sea as they sail along."

Keats's "rills" are, of course, the "springs" of the "lofty tree" passage already quoted, and the stream coming "of purple hue" is taken almost bodily from this same Third Book, where Diodorus, relating that the Teians believed their city to be the birthplace of Bacchus, says:

> "The Teians, for confirmation of what they say, bring

[1] See Vol. I, p. 7.

this argument, that there is a spring in their city, which at certain times streams forth most rich and fragrant wine."

When it comes to the instruments, Keats both follows and leaves Diodorus, for Diodorus distinctly states that "in the heat of battle he made use of timbrels and cymbals; the trumpet being not at that time found out." This seems plain enough; but what does exact archeology matter to a poet, particularly when his instructor is anything but exact himself? In Sandys' translation of Ovid, the instruments are given as sac-buts and timbrels, and to the latter Keats much preferred Diodorus's cymbals, and naturally so, considering that he promptly married them to the happy adjective, "kissing." But Keats wanted trumpets, and the sac-buts gave him a sufficient excuse; an even better one added its weight, for Rabelais makes Bacchus's army advance to the sound of "cornets." The rest of the stanza is simply derived from general accounts of the legend, and particular excursions of Keats's own for the sake of bringing in the maiden.

In the next stanza comes Bacchus, and this is the Bacchus of Keats:

"Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite."

Ovid accosts his Bacchus in this wise:

". . . Still dost thou injoy
Unwasted youth; eternally a Boy!
Thou'rt seene in heaven; whom all perfections grace;
And, when unhorn'd, thou hast a Virgin's face."

This is Sandys rendering Ovid, of course, and Woodhouse's catalogue of Keats's books shows him to have

owned Ovid both in translation and in the original Latin, but he was much more familiar with the former. This Bacchus, joint production of Latin poet and English translator, is a very pale and staid personage compared to Keats's Bacchus. Far more lively and wanton, a much better prototype for this Bacchus of Keats, is that of Diodorus. "Being," says Diodorus, "a very beautiful young man, he spent the time of his youth in dancing, plays, and all manner of sports and pastimes." And later Diodorus describes him even more vividly:

> "They say, likewise, that the son of Semele . . . was of a slender and delicate shape of body, and most comely feature, exceeding amorous, and addicted to the sports of Venus."

This is a laughing, dancing, sporting, and rather lascivious young Bacchus, as is Keats's, but he is slender. Where did Keats get the idea of the plump shoulders then? Out of Rabelais, to be sure. For Rabelais's Bacchus "looked as young as a child . . . He was as red as a cherry, or a cherub, which you please, and had no more hair on his chin than there's in the inside of my hand."

The stanza ends with an emasculated picture of Silenus who, instead of "reeling still" and weakly hanging upon his ass, as Ovid has him — the abominable old drunkard of Diodorus and Rabelais — is pelted with flowers, and his actions in his cups are refined to the fact that he is "tipsily quaffing." In this we see another illustration of Keats's desire to smooth. It is even more in evidence in the next stanza, which describes the Mænads. In Ovid, they are "light Baccides," which is simply to beg the whole question; Sandys in his commentary is not so squeamish. He describes the Bacchic orgies of the Theban women imitating the Mænads with a forthright hand. There is no joy in his account, the ladies are very certainly the victims of "the furious effects of wine." Even Diodorus, whose

Mænads are "excellent singers," exceedingly merry, "armed with lances, and adorned with garlands of flowers," is obliged to admit that their descendants, the women of the Bacchanalia, ran about "like furies, hallooing and setting forth the praises of the god." How tame are Keats's Mænads in comparison with these! They seem agreeable young persons, lured but recently from their embroidery frames, starting out on a picnic. But they are gay, contagiously gay:

> "Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!
> So many, and so many, and such glee?
> Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
> Your lutes, and gentler fate? —
> 'We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
> A conquering!
> Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
> We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide: —
> Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
> To our wild minstrelsy!'"

But the minstrelsy is not so very wild after all. The stanza is a mere sugar-plum affair, tricked out with a little gilding and tied with a pink sash. This is confectionery, quite attractive confectionery, but not poetry. Yet it must be admitted that it is swift with movement, and that is an effect worth achieving. One interesting thing about it is that the Mænad's cry, "Bacchus on the wing" proves conclusively that Keats had Rabelais in his mind when he was writing the song. Of course, the obvious meaning is Bacchus on the march, Bacchus flying from country to country; but, although Keats probably meant this, he also meant much more. In the Fourth Book of Rabelais, he had most certainly come across this:

> "Formerly the Amycleans worshipped the noble Bacchus above all other gods, and gave him the name of Psila, which in the Doric dialect signifies wings; for, as the birds raise themselves by a towering flight with their wings

> above the clouds, so, with the help of soaring Bacchus, the powerful juice of the grape, our spirits are exalted to a pitch above themselves, our bodies are more sprightly, and their earthly parts become soft and pliant."

The Mænad's cry, read in the light of this passage, goes far to redeem the stanza.

The Satyrs, in the sixth stanza, are the conventional ones of every retailer of the legend. Ovid speaks of them as "skipping satyrs." Diodorus enlarges upon their sprightliness:

> "The satyrs, who are naturally inclined to skipping, dancing, and singing, and all other sorts of mirth, were taken in as part of the army."

This is in the First Book; in the Fourth, he mentions them again:

> "They say, likewise, that he carried satyrs along with him, who by their dancing and skipping in his sports and plays, made the god exceeding merry."

Keats's satyrs only "skip" by implication. By following the very words of the preceding stanza in the first two lines and again in the last two, he gives the effect of a dance with its necessary repetitions; both Mænads and Satyrs dance the same measure, first one group passes by and then the other. But these Keatsian Satyrs are chiefly remarkable for their kinship to the Satyr in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*. The country they have left is none of those through which Bacchus marched; if we are to judge it by its flora, it must be England. This is a cheerful geographical anachronism. Keats, knowing nothing about India pertinent to the Satyrs, gives them heath, mushrooms, and broom, which is probably not so much due to reading as to some walk over Hampstead Heath to Caen Wood.

The seventh stanza is so interesting for its derivations that I must quote it entire:

"Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
With Asian elephants:
Onward these myriads — with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.
Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains;
A three days' journey in a moment done:
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn."

According to Diodorus: "Osiris, being come to the borders of Ethiopia . . . Thence he passed through Arabia, bordering upon the Red sea as far as to India." (It was in Ethiopia, Diodorus says, that "a company of Satyrs were presented to him.") All these countries and many more, such as Egypt, Abyssinia, etc. are exhaustively described by Diodorus. Truly, to read him is to pass over "streams and mountains" galore, and these descriptions added many a touch to this *Triumph of Bacchus*. For instance, Diodorus, coming to Arabia, speaks of "lions, wolves, and leopards, out of the deserts"; Arabia, too, gave Keats the connotative idea of the "sleek Arabians." The tigers come from Sandys' commentary of Ovid's Fourth Book, where they are called "Gangetic tygres," but it is noticeable that Ovid states that Bacchus's chariot was drawn by lynxes, and Keats eschews the lynx. He does not mention specifically what sort of beasts drew Bacchus's car, but he had plenty of choice, for Rabelais sends the god into battle with leopards, and marches him triumphantly away har-

nessed to elephants — those "Asian elephants," gloriously given a line all by themselves! Ovid has no elephants, but they tramp up and down the pages of Diodorus in herds: India affords "plentiful pastures for multitudes of mighty elephants"; "India breeds the largest, most courageous, and strongest elephants of any other place"; Bacchus "was the first in triumph mounted upon an Indian elephant"; Osiris "addicted himself much to hunting of elephants." There is a wonderful account, which Keats must have delighted in, but which space forbids me to quote, of the method employed by the Ethiopians to kill elephants. Keats chose to take his elephants from Asia, doubtless because of the sound of the word "Asian," but that is a trifle. Keats invents the zebras, as he also does the alligators, but these last owe their existence to the crocodiles, who come directly from Diodorus, for the old historian assures us that "there are crocodiles and river-horses in Egypt," and that "the river Nile breeds many creatures of several forms and shapes . . . the crocodile . . . its skin is covered all over with scales of an extraordinary hardness." Note that the "infant laughers" ride on the "scaly backs" of crocodiles. This episode refers to the legend that Bacchus had once been taken prisoner by the Thuscan pirates. Given the legend, and given the crocodiles — but what, if anything, gave the infants on their backs? Again it is Rabelais. In his Fifth Book, shortly after the description of the Bacchus pictures, we read:

> ". . . round the body of the crystal lamp there was carved in cataglyphic work a lively and pleasant battle of naked boys, mounted on little hobby-horses, with little whirligig lances and shields that seemed made of vine-branches with grapes on them; their postures generally were very different, and their childish strife and motions were so ingeniously expressed that art equalled nature in every proportion and action."

The "whirligig lances and shields" and the "childish strife and motions" are responsible for

> ". . . the coil
> Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers toil"

mimicked by Keats's "infant laughers." Of no great importance, except that we happen, for the moment, to be tracing these things, is the parallel between Keats's "Nor care for wind and tide," and Coleridge's line "Withouten wind, withouten tide," in the *Ancient Mariner*, published in *Sibylline Leaves*.

Continuing with Keats's menagerie, the "panthers' furs" are obvious, for the panther was sacred to Bacchus; but the unicorn brings us back to Rabelais, whose "cornets" again figure in the "horns" to the notes of which Bacchus's army went a-hunting. These unicorns are "a curst sort of creatures" declares Rabelais, and he ought to know as he saw "two and thirty" of them, "out of each of their foreheads sprouts out a sharp black horn, some six or seven feet long; commonly it dangles down like a turkey-cock's comb. When a unicorn has a mind to fight, or put it to any other use, what does it do but make it stand, and then 'tis as straight as an arrow." It is evident that such an animal deserves the adjective "spleenful."

Coming to the eighth stanza, Professor de Sélincourt thinks that "Osirian Egypt" is taken from Milton's *Ode to the Nativity*. It may be; but, considering the number of pages devoted to Osiris in Diodorus, I think it a most natural expression without any necessity to look elsewhere for it. Nor need we seek Milton's "heathen deities vailing their might before the infant Christ," to quote Professor de Sélincourt, in Keats's "parch'd Abyssinia," "old Tartary," "kings of Inde," "Brahma," etc. falling under the yoke of Bacchus. This is part and parcel of the legend specifically amplified by imagination. Abyssinia is again from Diodorus, even the word "parch'd" appears in one

of his descriptions, although it is connected with Ethiopia, not Abyssinia. These transpositions are all in the poet's, any poet's, way of working. The passage runs:

> "By reason of the scorching heat, and want of both spring and river water, the grass is parched up, and none to be had."

This resemblance might seem far-fetched if it stood by itself, but when we find Keats so often leaning upon, and paraphrasing, Diodorus, it is not unreasonable to assume that in reading this sentence he was struck by the word "parched," so vividly illustrated by Diodorus, and made use of it here.

At the end of the stanza, the Indian maiden tells how she strayed away from Bacchus's company and wandered alone until the meeting with Endymion.

Three final stanzas return to the metre and sentiment of the beginning of the poem.

Titian's picture, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, in the National Gallery, London, is commonly supposed to have been Keats's chief source of inspiration in the *Triumph of Bacchus*. An idea which I do not subscribe to at all. In the first place, Keats does not mention Ariadne, who, indeed, belongs to a subsidiary myth. In the second place, the mood of the picture is quite different from the mood of Keats's poem. Sir Sidney Colvin's contention that Keats was more often moved to poetry by things he saw than by things he read, cannot, I believe, be substantiated. He saw the *Grecian Urn*, but he read Chapman's *Homer*; he heard the *Nightingale*, but he read of Endymion; he walked out of Winchester on an Autumn day, but he was extremely familiar with Boccaccio; the *Eve of Saint Agnes* is pure, digested, etherealized folk-lore, so is the *Eve of Saint Mark*; *Lamia* was read of, so was *Hyperion*; *Meg Merrilies* is a book tale at second hand, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* sprang from library shelves.

In spite of Keats's extraordinary powers of observation, and his delight in certain pictures, if it be the initial inspiration which Sir Sidney refers to, I think the palm goes to reading. The sources of the *Triumph of Bacchus* do, indeed, the more carefully we examine them, boil down to Ovid, Diodorus Siculus, and Rabelais.

Speaking of this *Indian Maiden's Song*, Dr. Robert Bridges makes an amazing statement.[1] He declares it to be "unmatched for life, wide motion, and romantic dreamy Orientalism." I find none of these things in it, except the motion. It is too artificial to contain much life. The procession is an amusing picture, but it is not in the least Oriental. I wish I knew what Dr. Bridges means by "romantic, dreamy Orientalism." Dreamy romance is certainly not a quality of Greek literature, and one may search the Bible, that great storehouse of Hebrew texts, without finding anything to qualify; Egyptian literature has no trace of it, and never once in my delvings into the literatures of China and Japan have I come across anything to which the term might fitly be given. The Hindu may supply us with mysticism, even, perhaps, if one chooses to call it so, romance, but scarcely, I think, of the type to which "dreamy" would apply. Persian literature comes the nearest, but the romantic dreams of Persia are so entirely based upon eroticism that any comparison between them and Keats's lyric simply cannot be made. Keats knew nothing of any Oriental state of mind; to most English speaking people, the Bible is not a study for comparative literature, but a document of faith, and there is no evidence that Keats ever escaped from this point of view and read it as a book like other books. After all, how could the song be Oriental, considering that the legend on which it is based reached Keats through the medium of a Roman, a Sicilian, and a Frenchman? All that is dreamy in the poem are the first two stanzas of the *Triumph of Bacchus* section, and this is Coleridge's dream, which is *Kubla*

[1] *John Keats. A Critical Essay*, by Robert Bridges. 1895.

*Khan*, derived from old travellers' tales of the Orient, it is true, but changed and transmuted by Coleridge into universal beauty.

If we examine the song, we are immediately struck by the fact that there are two breaks in it; one, which I have already pointed out, following immediately upon the *Ode to Sorrow* section, and one after the first two stanzas of the *Triumph of Bacchus* section. That the *Ode to Sorrow* was originally intended to be a song by itself seems most probable, particularly as we know that Keats copied it, and it alone, in the letter to Jane Reynolds already quoted. After it comes so decided a change in the temper of the song that I feel certain the stanzas immediately following it represent an entirely new beginning. Keats had been reading Coleridge, and these two new stanzas have so much of the flavour of Coleridge in them that I think, in all likelihood, Keats jotted them down while the mood induced by Coleridge was strong upon him. I doubt whether he knew how the poem so begun was to go on. He was under the spell of Coleridge, and tried his hand at the same sort of thing. Two reasons must have brought him up short; the first, the difficulty of doing Coleridge's type of thing as well as Coleridge did it; the second, the unwisdom of doing it at all. With a determined round-about-face, Keats took up the Bacchus theme which he had already decided was to go in somewhere. He took his cue from the scene he had found in Diodorus and lit with Coleridge's sun, and continued the poem in an entirely different key.

Here then, is a poem, an unrelated poem; he likes it and wonders where he can fit it in. The plot of his Fourth Book is already fairly well laid down — as to episode, at any rate — and this seems the only place where the Bacchus lyric can possibly go; so he hitches it, rather awkwardly, to the *Ode to Sorrow* and adds the last three stanzas to make the hitching plausible. It is an ingenious

bit of literary cabinet work, but, for all his efforts, the song remains two distinct poems.

Probably some time elapsed between the writing of the *Ode to Sorrow* and the final blending of it with the *Triumph of Bacchus*. Each represents a lyric mood. Keats is getting on badly with *Endymion*, he is in a fever to follow those various hints and suggestions which are forever flowing into a poet's mind. It was a relief to write the *Ode to Sorrow*; but another mood seizes him and again it is a relief to do the *Triumph of Bacchus*, which represents a rebound from an abortive Coleridge mood. The poem, then, is psychologically interesting as showing Keats utterly weary of sticking to his last, represented by *Endymion*, but teeming with desires leading to other things. The *Ode to Sorrow* is poor, he cannot quite get his stride, much as he wants to write it. He dashes at Coleridge and knows he is baffled, and falls upon the *Triumph of Bacchus* in a kind of "well-if-I-can't-do-that-I-can-do-this" state of mind. And he does it, and feels infinitely better afterwards.

The Bacchus lyric has been extravagantly praised, rather out of proportion to its merits, I fear. What is chiefly interesting in it is its rhythm. Luckily for Keats, this new rhythm makes an excellent foil to that of the *Ode to Sorrow*. Again Keats tries the occasional, irregularly repeated short line, and succeeds admirably with it. When we consider that the metre is exactly that of the *Hymn to Pan*, differentiated only by the use of more short lines and a slightly irregular rhyming scheme, we shall be forcibly struck with how great a change of movement Keats has managed to bring into it. Metres do not always determine rhythms, and rhythmically the *Triumph of Bacchus* is as far from the rhythm of the *Hymn to Pan* as can well be. What Keats did not do in the *Hymn to Neptune*, he has done triumphantly here. It is not only variation within a pattern; it is the taking of an excellent pattern, full of its own variations, and so altering it, and varying it

from the alteration, that the result is a feat of technical skill.

As a poem, however, the *Triumph of Bacchus* is not in the same class with the *Hymn to Pan*. Keats is master of his medium in the Bacchus; the *Hymn to Pan* masters him. In one case, he is possessed and transcended; in the other, he remains outside and guides. Poems consciously composed may reach a very high plane, but never so high a one as poems subconsciously composed. It may be said that Keats wrote the *Triumph of Bacchus*; but that the *Hymn to Pan* wrote itself. I am not taking into consideration corrections made after the heat of composition is over, because, strange as it may seem, they have almost nothing to do with whether the original draft is done subconsciously or not. A common reason for them is that the subconscious mind dictates too fast for the poet to follow; again, the connection between the subconscious and the conscious minds may break, here and there, leaving holes which the poet must fill as best he can. It is, nevertheless, a fact that Keats made many more corrections in the *Triumph of Bacchus* than he did in the *Hymn to Pan*.

The Bacchus poem is, apart from its rhythm, a marvellous achievement in condensation. If any one will take the trouble to read Ovid, Diodorus, and Rabelais with an attention to detail, and then turn to this poem and see how much of this detail Keats has been able to force into service in his eight stanzas, that person will, I think, be amazed. It is this extraordinary wealth of detail, doubtless, which has confused Dr. Bridges into declaring the poem "unmatched for life." It is not life which is here, but literature; and what raises it from verse well done to poetry, is, uniquely, its rhythm.

The line immediately following the song is:

"O what a sigh she gave in finishing."

At which we cannot help smiling. For the sigh is evidently

autobiographical. The song did Keats good; it set him on his feet once more, and started him going at a swifter rate than had been possible to him for some time.

I have analyzed the *Triumph of Bacchus* at so great a length, because no other poem shows with equal clarity how Keats worked when he was writing to a theme. Usually, many as are the echoes he permits himself, he does not adhere as strictly as this to his sources. I do not mean that his treatment in this poem is not original; it is, very. But his method here is somewhat akin to the old game, where, given a word and a question, each player must write a poem bringing in the word and answering the question. Another important motive for the long survey I have made of this particular poem is that no previous biographer has noted its connection with the works of Diodorus and of Rabelais, and Professor Lowes's study, not being yet in print, is for the time being inaccessible.

Keats resumes his narrative with the weary and wistful line I quoted a moment ago. The Indian maiden is utterly exhausted by the account of her miseries. Endymion, speechless, listens to

> ". . . the wind that now did stir
> About the crisped oaks full drearily,
> Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
> Remember'd from its velvet summer song."

These lines are in Keats's most charming outdoor manner, and we see in them his inveterate tendency throughout *Endymion* to make the seasons of the poem coincide with the seasons in which he is writing. It was Spring when he began the poem, and it is Spring and early Summer during the whole of the First Book. The rose and butterfly of the Second Book give us Summer a little more advanced, and the moon passages of the Third Book are obviously August pictures. Now it is Autumn, and the Fourth Book reflects the first touch of Autumnal change.

Endymion rouses himself to speak to the maiden, and proceeds to make love in what is easily the worst love passage of the poem. How bad it is can be inferred by the expression, "thine other softling" in speaking of one of the lady's hands. In spite of his fervent love making, he is troubled with qualms of conscience, and he begs the maiden not to let him think. Suddenly the words "Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?" echo through the forest. The lovers clasp each other trembling:

> ". . . when lo,
> Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime
> Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time
> Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropt
> Towards the ground."

No one, comparing this descent of Mercury with the departure of Circe in the Third Book, can fail to be astonished by the excellence of the figures employed to describe the different effects of movement which Keats wished to convey.

Mercury, veering down to earth, delays only long enough to touch the ground with his wand and instantly darts up again and disappears. Immediately two black horses spring out of the turf, Endymion places the Indian maiden on one, vaults upon the other himself, and they are off on the skyey flight which Keats, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, borrowed from Drayton. Through the "sleepy dusk" they fly. They meet Sleep, drowsily floating toward heaven "to hear the marriage melodies" of a goddess with a mortal. At his approach, the horses spread their wings on the mist and fall asleep, and outstretched upon these same wings Endymion and the Indian maiden also slumber. In his sleep, Endymion dreams that he is in heaven, surrounded by the gods and goddesses, walking and talking among them. The Seasons appear and join in a dance with the Hours. They demand

of one another who this mortal may be, and answer one another that it is the beloved of Diana. "Lo," they cry, "she rises crescented." Endymion looks,

> ". . . 'tis she,
> His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
> And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;
> Good-bye to all but love!"

Apparently, at the sight of Diana, Endymion realizes at last that she and no other is the goddess he has loved so long and sought through earth, ocean, and sky. He springs toward her and awakes, but to his astonishment he finds himself still among the whole company of gods and goddesses. Diana bends to him; but, as she does so, Endymion is aware of the Indian maiden sleeping at his side. He feels himself cruelly torn between his two loves. His heart surges toward Diana "as to its rightful throne," yet the Indian maiden is so beautiful he cannot refrain from kissing her. He craves forgiveness of his bright goddess, and immediately kisses the Indian maiden again. At this last kiss, the goddess weeps and melts into the air. Endymion, distracted, cries to her to stay, to search his heart. The cry ends with the despairing words:

> ". . . Is there nought for me
> Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?"

Endymion's cry wakes the Indian maiden, and while he insists that they must leave "this murky phantasm" because it would be a horrible thing if she were to die from his "heart-treachery," she weeps. He longs to be "whole in love" as is she, and yet he assures her that he feels perfectly innocent. He can see no end, only his spirit flitting solitary through the dark. In an agony of confusion and shame at his divided loyalty, he arouses the horses, who carry the lovers on across a sky fading from sunset into night.

The work had been going fairly well since the beginning of the *Triumph of Bacchus*, but at this point there was another break; Keats went to Burford Bridge. Things had not been altogether peaceful at Hampstead. Hunt had lectured him about his poem, Tom Keats's health had become a subject of anxiety, and there were other things to tease and distract. I will not anticipate; all these worries will appear in due course in the next chapter. I merely allude to them here as a cause for Keats's decision to seek solitude and change of scenery. The exact spot in the poem at which this break occurred is determined by a couple of sentences in letters written to Reynolds and Bailey just after his arrival at Burford Bridge. To Bailey, he writes:

> "At present, I am just arrived at Dorking — to change the Scene — change the Air, and give me a spur to wind up my Poem, of which there are wanting 500 lines."

Line 497 of this Fourth Book, by Keats's reckoning, immediately precedes one of those divisions in the narrative which serve to indicate a change of some sort; they may, indeed, be considered in the light of stanzaic pauses. As it seems most likely that Keats would delay a journey, the date of which was unimportant, until some such pause was reached, it is probable that this particular pause represents what of the Fourth Book was written before he went to Burford Bridge. "Five hundred lines" was approximate, not actual, for obviously no one would say "There are wanting five hundred and three lines to finish my poem," particularly if the number of lines to be completed were also approximate as, in this case, they naturally were. But there is a farther proof which makes it certain that the break was just here. The letter to Reynolds tells a very important piece of news, for in it Keats says, quite casually:

> "I like this place very much. There is Hill and Dale and

a little River. I went up Box hill this Evening after the moon — 'you a' seen the Moon' — came down, and wrote some lines."

Now the next lines after the pause are these:

> "Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,
> The moon put forth a little diamond peak,
> No bigger than an unobserved star,
> Or tiny point of fairy scymetar;
> Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie
> Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
> She bow'd into the heavens her timid head."

How many the "some lines" were, we do not know. They seem to have been a good many, for he quotes to Reynolds from the wedding song of the multitudes, beginning at the line, "Crystalline brother of the belt of Heaven" to "Haste, haste away." But we may be certain that the moon, drifted over by clouds through which it partially emerges with an extreme of shining every now and then, was the moon seen from Box Hill on that twenty-second day of November, 1817.

Keats might not have mentioned these lines to Bailey in any case, but a very cogent reason for not mentioning them is that they were not written at the time he wrote. Buxton Forman puts the letter to Reynolds before the letter to Bailey in his editions, but I think he is in error, because of these two passages. I believe that Keats wrote his letter to Bailey either the day before, on November twenty-first, or in the morning or afternoon of the twenty-second, for I own this letter, and the postmark is "Leatherhead, 22 NO. 1817." The letter itself is undated, Buxton Forman dates it from the postmark alone. But Leatherhead was evidently the post town, for Burford Bridge was merely a hamlet at that time, and it is scarcely likely that a letter written in the evening would be postmarked at a town three miles distant on the same night, even though

the mail did not go out until after eleven. That it must have been written in the evening if it were written after the letter to Reynolds is clear, as in the letter to Reynolds Keats says, "I went up Box hill this Evening." The Reynolds letter is dated "Leatherhead, 22 November, 1817," which is to give Reynolds his postal address, of course, as Reynolds, who had been seeing him constantly in London, must have known where he was staying. Buxton Forman gives no postmark, and I have not seen the holograph, but undoubtedly the letter was sent the next day and so would have been postmarked November twenty-third.

Many have been the speculations by both readers and critics as to which were the lines that Keats wrote after coming down from Box Hill that evening, but no one hitherto, apparently, has thought of the simple expedient of counting lines and gauging probabilities. I offer my argument and its results for what they are worth.

Coleridge crops up again in the little diamond moon peak, "No bigger than an unobserved star," for one of the most vividly imagined pictures in the *Ancient Mariner* is the one where

> "All in a hot and copper sky
> The bloody sun, at noon,
> Right up above the mast did stand,
> No bigger than the moon."

At the sight of the moon sailing through the clouds, Endymion looks to see if the Indian maiden has noticed its wonderful beauty, and, to his horrified eyes, her body seems to be fading. He seizes her wrist and finds that it is his own hand which he is grasping. This line is another of the mateless ones scattered all through the poem. That the loss of the companion line was unintentional, would seem proved by the cacophony of this, which reads:

> "And, horror! Kiss'd his own — he was alone."

Buxton Forman is surely correct in his surmise that the line "was condensed from a roughly drafted couplet in which 'own' rhymed with 'alone.'"

The lady vanished, her steed "dropt hawkwise to the earth." Not so Endymion's charger, who still bears him on through the sky. Here follows a passage of great beauty in which Keats, under a figure, exemplifies the old adage that it is always darkest before dawn. He describes the soul, tormented with grief, falling into a deep sleep. In this sleep, all miseries are forgotten, there is only the consciousness of a vague sense of well-being. This passage is certainly not autobiographical, except in a general sense. Keats was not unhappy at this time, and he was very far from being numb. I mention this as so many passages in *Endymion* have reference to Keats's state of feeling and being at the time of writing; this one, however, has no such significance. He is either remembering some state of mind experienced long before, or merely projecting his imagination into a possible one.

Endymion, asleep or entranced, it is not quite clear which, fails to notice a multitude which passes him singing. But if he does not see, he does, it seems, hear, for the song ends abruptly, because

> "... More
> Endymion heard not."

The beginning of this song is quite charming, with its catalogue of flowers and herbs written in that simple, effective style which is so peculiarly English, to be copied by no other nation whatsoever. It has persisted in English poetry ever since the days of Chaucer, and is one of the chief delights of the Elizabethans. It seems almost a property of the soil, for expatriated Englishmen soon lose the touch, and as to poets of other countries, I can think of no single instance in which one has captured it. The song, which is an epithalamium for Diana, proceeds with a

long allusion to the signs of the zodiac and their actions on this auspicious night. The signs of the zodiac, it will be remembered, constituted one of the parallels between Keats's poem and Drayton's *Endimion and Phœbe*. This song is in the same metre as the two *Hymns* and the *Triumph of Bacchus*, yet again it has a totally different effect, although this time the result seems to be chiefly a lack of effect. We are not struck with its rhythm; it is without any defined movement other than an unruffled, continuous flow, and in this very fact we see another evidence of Keats's skill in the use of the form.

As the song ceases to be heard, Endymion's horse sweeps down with him

> "Prone to the green head of a misty hill"

which is, of course, Box Hill, seen from Norbury Park or some other place where Keats had been in his walks.

The touch of the earth beneath his feet arouses Endymion, but it also brings back to him the memory of his lost mortal love, the Indian maiden. All at once, he hears her voice, and sees her lying on the grass. The exaltation of his flight is gone, once more he pines for the human contact he believes he has enjoyed with her. If only she will return to him he will be satisfied and give up forever his heavenward aspirations. Very well conceived are his words:

> ". . . I have clung
> To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
> Or felt but a great dream."

This again is drama, as is the whole passage, which is also poetically excellent, although, in spots, a bit florid and Watteau-like. On the whole, however, this is one of the successful passages of the poem. The companionship of woods, fields, and streams, always set Keats off, to use his own expression, "like a cannon-ball." This is plainly Autumn at Box Hill:

"... Under the brow
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none;
And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place."

Keats was certainly "joying" in just such a place himself when he wrote that.

Following what now seems his desire, Endymion declares that he will seek "cloudy phantasms" no more. He bids them good-bye:

"... Caverns lone, farewell!
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
Of visionary seas! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast."

He will devote himself henceforward to his Indian maiden, yet not without a slight pang of regret for the goddess of his dream:

"... Although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.
On earth I may not love thee."

He will make offerings to Diana if only she will shine on, and bless, his other love. He then turns to the pleasures he will contrive for the Indian maiden, and it is the account of them which brings Watteau to mind. Dainty conceits, these, in an eighteenth century vein, as where he says:

"I will entice this crystal rill to trace
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face."

Hearing him, the Indian maiden again weeps, although happiness shines in her eyes, a cheering omen which Endymion fails to discover. She answers him in a way that

must have been fairly distracting, since she speaks partly as Diana, partly as the Indian maiden. Hitherto she has been herself and her disguise by turns, but now she mingles both these personalities in what she says. The game of hide and seek which Diana plays all through this Fourth Book, popping in and out of her assumed personality, is decidedly intriguing, although it needs close attention on the part of a reader to follow her changes of individuality. Now she calls on Eros, declaring him cruel to her. She cries out that she has always believed in his kindness and that he would befriend her, but she finds herself bitterly wronged. She informs Endymion that she may not be his; it is forbidden. But from whom this prohibition emanates, she is very careful not to say. They might embrace and die, to be sure, the victims of an obscure vengeance, but she prefers to bless and leave him.

Endymion takes this baffling speech in good faith, it seems, and never guesses that again he has to do with the goddess. Beaten by her assurance that they must part, he has nothing to say, and the two wander on dolefully. After a while, Diana cannot bear his gloom. In a cryptic utterance, she announces that "felicity has been thy meed for many thousand years," and hints that he is now more than mortal. That Diana is merely teasing him with her declaration that all is over for them, is quite evident, since heaven is already agog with her approaching marriage. By this time, the lovers have arrived at the very stream-side where Endymion had "his first soft poppy dream," but he is too miserable to recognize it. He does not even observe that Diana is smiling. Then he sees that someone else is there, and this someone is staring at him. It is his sister Peona.

Peona is greatly distressed at the sight of Endymion's sorrow, particularly as he is "hand in hand with one so beautiful." Are the two of them, perhaps, "too happy to be glad?" She begs them to "feel as if it were a common

day," which is perfect psychology, finely expressed, even if Keats did cull "common day" from Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality*, as Professor de Sélincourt thinks. She tells the Indian maiden that she shall be the queen of the shepherd folk and that to-night there is to be a festival to Diana; Endymion has been believed dead, and his return will bring a great rejoicing.

Endymion, in another line of intimate psychological perception on Keats's part,

> "Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
> And twang'd it inwardly."

The upshot of the matter is that he accepts his fate. He does not tell Peona this, as she knows nothing about what has passed, but he declares that he would have Peona his only friend, the only person he sees, for he is resolved to be a hermit, and asks her to allow the Indian maiden to live with her henceforward. Diana pretends to be very grateful for the suggestion which gives her a home at last, and says that she will become a priestess of Diana, and that

> ". . . this very night shall see
> My future days to her fane consecrate."

They are all a little confused, except possibly Diana. They try to keep up their spirits by talking as though these remarkable suggestions were perfectly natural and in the due course of things. Endymion is the first to realize that an end must precede a beginning. He bids them good-bye, and Peona, with the disguised Diana, walks "dizzily away." They have no sooner been lost to sight in a cypress grove than Endymion calls after them. But it is too late; they have gone.

Endymion can endure no more. Down he lies, as he always does in any crisis, but this time he is unvisited by either dream or vision. So he remains

"All the long day; save when he scantly lifted
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
With the slow move of time, — sluggish and weary
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
Had reach'd the river's brim."

How briefly and surely Keats has caught the shadows of the high poplars stealing imperceptibly upon the still sunny river!

Evening having come, Endymion starts off for the temple. He had shouted into the cypress wood for Peona and the Indian maiden to meet him there that he might take a last farewell of his beloved, but, as no answer was vouchsafed him, he is ignorant of whether they heard or not.

It is a beautiful evening of early Autumn. Endymion notices all its loveliness as he goes along, thinking what a wonderful time it is for his last meeting with his Indian lady. He considers that he will, that very night, die; meaning, I suppose, that bidding good-bye to all that means life to him is, in fact, death. Rather unfairly, he persuades himself that he has been a searcher after the lighter aspects of love and that he is justly paid. This cruel judgment of himself acts as a sort of flagellation and exalts him to a pitch of hysterical happiness; Keats calls it a "sort of deathful glee." It pleases him to imagine that this bright evening is a fitting end to a life inordinately stirred by beauty. Yet, beneath this, he feels an impious rage at having been abandoned by the very loveliness he has worshipped, which is a euphemism, presumably, for the goddess of the moon to whom his life from a child has been dedicated.

So absorbed is he in his rebellious revery that he does not observe the approach of Peona and the Indian maiden. Peona asks what it is he wants. Endymion replies that his desire, if only heaven would permit, is to command all their fates. Amazingly, at this, Diana tells him that "By

Cupid's dove," he shall! Whereupon, in front of him, she changes from the black-haired Indian maiden to the golden-haired Diana. He knows her at last as she is, his only love. She explains:

> ". . . Drear, drear
> Has our delaying been; but foolish fear
> Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate;
> And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state
> Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change
> Be spiritualiz'd."

Endymion, so addressed, kneels before her while she blesses Peona, and promises many future meetings. The lovers vanish, and Peona goes

> "Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment."

So the poem, the effort of seven long months of labour, ends. On the last page of the draft, Keats wrote: "Burford Bridge. Nov. 28, 1817 —" It was done, the interminable vigil was over. We can imagine the sense of relief with which he recorded the place and date of his emancipation.

We, who read *Endymion* a hundred years after its publication, need not be disturbed by its departures from the strict form of the couplet, as were contemporary critics. Run-on lines and displaced accents are not disagreeable to twentieth century ears. Poetry has widened its prosodiac boundaries just as music has its harmonic ones. Neither art has stood still, and what were daring innovations once have become usual even to staleness. Modern readers are more troubled by past participles scanned as two syllables except where they are purposely abbreviated; and to present-day taste coined words are not more irritating than obsolete words, the precedents for which have sunken out of memory.

Critics of the generations preceding mine have ticketed

and tracked Keats's verbal surprises with indefatigable zeal. I shall have nothing to say of them here, they may be exhaustively read about in so many books that to discuss them again would be an act of supererogation. I wish to be both simpler and more profound, if possible, by seeking the essence through the means. *Endymion* has persisted for a hundred years in spite of every sort of microscopic investigation, and when a book does that, there is some inherent reason which we shall do well to search for. It may be said that *Endymion* is read because Keats, in his later poems, set himself in such a position that all his work merits study; but I believe that *Endymion* deserves more than this. It does, indeed, seem probable that *Endymion* would still be a poem to be reckoned with had Keats never written another line.

Shelley has made the shrewdest criticism on it that has yet been written when he says:

> "Much praise is due me for having read it, the author's intention appearing to be that no person could possibly get to the end of it. I think if he had printed about fifty pages of fragments from it, I should have been led to admire Keats as a poet more than I ought, of which there is now no danger."

A poem, of which even fifty pages of fragments tempted Shelley to admire the poet more than he ought, is no negligible thing. Let us admit, with Shelley, that to read the poem through is a hard task, and yet most people who are fond of poetry do manage to get through it once in their lives, if they are lucky enough to have read nothing about it beforehand. Having read it, however, most of us promptly forget all but a few passages, but these stick so close in the mind that they are never forgotten, and we go back to them from time to time with constantly renewed appreciation. For, with all its faults, obscurities, and digressions, *Endymion* is the spirit of youth rampant.

Its adolescence is irresistible; to read it is to touch the day-spring of life.

First and foremost, let us brush away the dusty cloud of extraneous meanings with which the Victorian critics have well-nigh smothered its brightness. *Endymion* is no allegory. Keats's mind was not of the kind which works in parables. He was as clear as daylight in thought and expression, with his feet planted firmly on the good round earth, and his eyes busy beholding the beauties of a material universe which includes friendship, love, and all sorts of human intercourse as well as clouds, trees, sea, flowers, and moonlight.

Keats was concerned with poetry as an art, not as a tract. As Mr. Finney, to whose interesting paper[1] I have referred so often at the beginning of this chapter, well says: "Keats did not love the 'Faerie Queene' for its allegory or 'Paradise Lost' for its religious purpose; but he loved them for their 'sweets of song.'" Yet when I say that Keats never could have wished to write an exact allegory, I do not mean to imply that his poetry is all surface with no bottom. Keats was a man of keen intellect, a thinker as well as a poet. His poetry means a great deal beneath what it says, which is only to state that, like all real poetry, it is full of suggestion. But suggestion is as far from allegory as a page of Emerson is from the Athanasian creed.

*Endymion* is one of the most suggestive poems in English literature, but apart from the basic theory that love is the principal of all things and "creative of essential Beauty," the suggestions in it are as fleeting and unrelated as a Summer day-dream.

Also, we must not forget that during the seven months of its composition Keats was in the eager, receptive state of mind of a very young man to whom the world is opening wider every day, challenging him to a thousand new

[1] *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney.

thoughts, upheaving and altering ideas in a myriad ways, breaking, upbuilding, making over that very tough and fragile thing, a personality.

*Endymion* is chaotic because Keats was chaotic at the time he wrote it. The First Book is the most charming, because it is the most boyish. The Second Book is chiefly interesting because it is so imaginative, the rush and zest of the First Book is calming down, but it is replaced by such a huge fervour of imagery that we are carried along on its flood of pictures in a breathless hurry of pleased perception; it is also psychologically the most significant in the poem. The Third Book, after the nostalgic and rather wistful splendour of the moon passages, becomes heavy and laboured, since Keats himself was weighed down under the new sensations which pressed upon him through his intercourse, for the first time in his life, with that questionable benefit to a poet, the mind of a scholar. Keats had intellect enough to rate scholarship at its true value, and pierce through the pedantic vestibule of learning to the columned courts which lie beyond, had he been given time. Plenty of poets have done this; in modern times, Browning is the noticeable example. But Keats had a better mind than Browning, and where Browning, competent scholar and magnificent poet though he was, remained as an original thinker almost a child, we may be sure, from the evidences of his letters and criticisms, that Keats would eventually have stamped on jejune points of view and kept his thought and poetry to an equal level. I do not say that Keats would ever have been as great a poet as Browning; I think that is extremely doubtful. What I mean can best be expressed under a figure — for Browning may be likened to a man driving a tandem, of which the leader is his poetry and the wheeler his thought; while Keats would surely have driven his thought and poetry harnessed side by side, a well-matched pair, both up in the collar and pulling for all they were worth.

The Fourth Book is a little weary, in spite of all Keats can do, yet it is a more thorough and tempered piece of work than any of the others. It hangs together better, is calmer, and more integral in structure. But it has neither the sparkle of the First Book, the psychological importance and imaginative wealth of the Second, nor the beauty of the moon passages in the Third. It does gather up the threads of the poem to a plausible ending, nevertheless. I can imagine someone reading it first and alone; and, should anyone do so, I am convinced it would appear as a perfectly logical ending to a poem which might have preceded it.

It will be remembered that, in my analysis of the First Book, I quoted from the letter written to Bailey from Burford Bridge on November twenty-second. I said that what in the beginning was felt rather than thought became in the end a conscious expression of opinion. Off by himself at Burford Bridge, Keats had a chance to range his new ideas and sensations into some sort of order, and out of this order he evolved what he wrote to Bailey. Yet the Fourth Book is less suggestive in this respect than the First. He was more conscious of his direction; but the direction and the narrative, as he had conceived it out of Drayton, did not jibe. Failing to find an end so good as the one he had planned but which would better fit his thought, and in a desperate hurry to finish, Keats laid philosophy aside and ended with pure story. There is no necessity to see symbolism in the skyey ride, as the allegorical critics have done, when we remember that it is in Drayton, and also that it joins the poem to the dream flight in the First Book and the longing for a second flight in the Second Book. The letter to Bailey was written when the Fourth Book was only half done, and it is a noticeable fact that nothing of his speculations gets into the lines written subsequently. Bailey kept all Keats's letters, so we may be fairly sure that he was not written to

again while Keats was at Burford Bridge. We have no record of any more letters from Burford Bridge to anybody. Keats wrote the last five hundred lines in a week, which was fast writing, only the less good Third Book seems to have been done at the unvarying rate of fifty lines a day. The moon and nature wrested him away from philosophical probings, and gave him back to his first love — the beautiful, unglossed moon.

It is unfortunate that this letter to Bailey should have led so many critics astray. They have read into it far more than it says, and developed *Endymion* into a complete allegory, which, I repeat, it is not. It has not occurred to them to measure theory with fact and study Keats not only as a poet, but as a man. Because of this allegorical bias, most of what has been written about the poem is ingenious, but lacks perception. Of these allegories, the best, because the simplest, is probably Sir Sidney Colvin's; the worst, because in the light of Keats's age and character it is nothing short of absurd, is that of Professor H. Clement Notcutt of Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Dr. Bridges' interesting study need be considered in this connection only when he deserts his exact allegorical structure for a less positive description in which he comes far nearer the truth. I am willing to admit that "the poet was very sensible to the mysterious effects of moonlight, and felt the poetry of nature more deeply under that influence; and that mood being given, one step further only is necessary, which is that other ecstatic and poetic moods should be likened to it, and the conditioning cause of the first, which is known, be taken for a symbol of the other unknown causes, of that which is common to all." So viewed, Dr. Bridges thinks that "the poem becomes . . . readable as a whole, suggestive of meaning, and full of shadowy outlines of mysterious truth"; and with this last sentence I am in perfect accord.

Poetry is avowedly what one makes of it. A poem

should mean different things to different people. All good poetry has a double character. It is at once absolute, and "full of shadowy outlines of mysterious truth." Its absolute quality can be gauged and criticized; its "shadowy outlines" will vary with every reader. In so far as a poem is an organic entity, it changes its meaning, which is why it lasts to ever succeeding generations.

Keats was right in saying that *Endymion* was as good as he could make it; it was. But as a long poem, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, all working together for a total effect, it was a failure. He knew this perfectly well. Has he not spoken of "the slip-shod 'Endymion'"? But his epithet was not well chosen, or only in so far that he scanted his revision of the poem. In itself, it is not slip-shod; it is merely not done. One man began it and another man ended it, that is all. Yet as a heap of fragments of marvellous beauty, it is an abiding solace and an enduring work of art; and as an illustration of poetic psychology, its value is incalculable.

## CHAPTER VI

### A HARD-WORKING SUMMER

We left Keats on Friday, May sixteenth, 1817, bowling along through the lovely Kent countryside on his way to Canterbury; Canterbury, where he hoped that the remembrance of Chaucer would set him "forward like a Billiard Ball." He started from Margate in the evening, but the fifteen miles or so to Canterbury cannot, at the longest, have taken much more than a couple of hours to traverse in one of the extremely efficient coaches of those days. England was approaching the height of her coach travel just at that time; steam-boats had made their appearance, it is true, but railroads had not yet come into being. Inland the coach carried him, where there was certainly no lack of the trees which he was seeking. Nothing could be more unlike Margate than the ancient city of Canterbury, with its great cathedral, and its memories of Thomas à Becket and Chaucer.

All his life, Keats seems to have experienced a remarkable stimulation at the thought of the older poets. He had the imaginative power of throwing round any place connected with a person whom he admired, or any object which such a person might have owned or touched, a bright halo of connotations. It was the fashion of the time to do so certainly. A year later we find Haydon nearly beside himself on reading in the paper of the finding of a ring in a field at Stratford which the credulous believed might have belonged to Shakespeare. The letter he writes to Keats on the subject is an idiotic extravaganza. Keats was never at any time, nor in anything, so silly as Haydon. Where one man plays the fool, the other is deeply and genuinely stirred. I do not know if, in this instance, Canterbury and the thought of Chaucer did set him for-

ward like a billiard ball, for not a single letter from Canterbury, or record of any kind of his stay there, has yet been found. The nearest approach to it is the letter from George Keats to Severn, referred to in the last chapter,[1] in a postscript to which George says: "John and Tom are at Canterbury." Canterbury, therefore, is a blank. It is scarcely possible that Keats wrote no letters while he was at Canterbury, but why, if he did write, has no scrap of paper dating from there ever turned up? The question is unanswerable, of course, the only shadow of a reason is that he was set forward at such a rate in his work that he had no time for letters. The probabilities are that he finished the First Book of *Endymion* at Canterbury. By a little tabulating of facts — which must have been known to all his former biographers, but appear to have urged them to no inquiry — I seem to have discovered evidence of a brief but joyful reaction, the sort of reaction which every sensible poet indulges in when he reaches a natural pause in a sustained composition. It has long been known that, at some time in his life, Keats visited Hastings, but apparently not much effort has been made to find out when, it being blithely assumed that the Hastings trip occurred in the early years, before our more exact knowledge of Keats begins. Yet there is in existence another letter from George Keats to Severn, which I have already made use of in a different connection,[2] and this letter contains a pregnant sentence. After scolding Severn for his constant complaining, quite in the style of the letter of May twenty-second, George remarks: "John will be in town again soon. When he is, I will let you know and repeat my invitation. He sojourns at Bo Peep, near Hastings. Tom's remembrances." [3]

This letter is dated simply "Hampstead, Tuesday," but the tone of it, compared with that of the other letter,

[1] See Vol. I, p. 349. [2] See Vol. I, p. 108.
[3] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

seems to place it as the last of the two, yet as following closely upon the first. It must have been written during the Summer of 1817, because, in 1816, the Keats brothers were not in Hampstead, and, in 1818, we know that, in the short time which elapsed between John's and Tom's return from Teignmouth and John's departure to Scotland, John went nowhere, being far too much occupied with George's marriage and immediate departure for America. It is barely possible that John and Tom returned to Hampstead after leaving Canterbury, and that John alone started off for Bo Peep. But this does not seem very likely, as, by that time, he was immersed in his Second Book; also it is rather far fetched to suppose that, having left the South coast, he would so soon run back to it again. What he probably did was to ship Tom back to London and betake himself to Bo Peep — of which he had doubtless heard from Haydon, with whom it was a favourite resort — in the holiday spirit induced by having brought his First Book to an end. Tom may have wanted to go home, being tired of travelling for the moment, since he was contemplating a trip to Paris later in the Summer. At any rate, it is quite clear that John went to Bo Peep alone.

If this reasoning be correct, George's second letter must have been written on either May twenty-seventh or June third, so that Keats would appear to have taken five or six weeks to write his First Book.

The little fishing village with the entrancing name of Bo Peep can be found on no map to-day, it has changed its character and its designation, the latter having been dropped in favour of the egregious, pretentious, and meaningless title of West Marina, for Keats's Bo Peep is now the extreme Western end of that popular watering-place, St. Leonards.

The only thing which Keats did at Bo Peep of which we have any cognizance was to kiss a lady. A very charming

lady, we are led to suppose, but a perpetually anonymous one, for Keats never found out her name. He met her again in London, once "when going to the English opera," another time when taking a walk; indeed, she pops in and out of his letters two or three times, but always under the soubriquet of "the lady I met at Hastings." Their intercourse seems to have gone no farther than the kiss aforesaid, but the fact of it shows Keats in a happy and enfranchised mood, thoroughly enjoying the lull between the finish of his First Book and the start on his Second.

Keats, having little ready money except what Taylor and Hessey had sent him in May, spent freely and agreeably, but spent; and in less than a month, found it necessary to apply again to the same source. The note in which he did so is postmarked June tenth,[1] not July tenth as in Buxton Forman's editions. The re-dating of this letter from the original holograph is most important, as it proves that Keats was already back in Hampstead early in June. This is evident because, although Keats put nothing at the top of his paper but "Tuesday Morn," the letter is addressed merely "Fleet Street," which fact means that it cannot have been written from any distant place, for, in that case, he would have been obliged to add "London." Also, June tenth was a Tuesday, while July tenth was a Thursday.

The manner in which he asks assistance is, it must be admitted, distasteful in its cool bravado, or rather the cool bravado of its opening. Keats was embarrassed, as well he might be, and his embarrassment takes the not unusual form of jaunty jocularity. He begins "My Dear Sirs, I must endeavor to lose my maidenhead with respect to money Matters as soon as possible — and I will too — so, here goes!" What goes is that "a couple of Duns" are hounding him; he had expected them to let him be "till the beginning, at least, of next month (when I am certain to

[1] Author's Collection.

be on my legs, for certain sure)." However, to disabuse his publishers of the idea that he is extravagant, and to leave in their minds an impression of his diligence in regard to the book they are going to publish, he is careful to declare that he is "not desolate, but have, thank God, 25 good notes in my fob. But then, you know, I laid them by to write with and would stand at bay a fortnight ere they should grab me. In a month's time I must pay, but it would relieve my mind if I owed you, instead of these Pelican duns." At the end, comes the time-honoured formula of borrowers, "I am sure you are confident of my responsibility, and in the sense of squareness that is always in me." Keats assuredly meant to be square, but he permitted the corners of his squareness to be chipped on occasions when his financial obligations pressed. A man who cheerfully spends his quarter's allowance before it is due, and makes a practice of so doing, is not the best judge of rectangularity. It was eight months since he had attained his majority, and during that time he had been at no pains to acquaint himself with his financial position. This letter is the first of many, unhappily. That Keats should never have given a thought to the possibility that he might be straining the good will of his publishers too far, speaks volumes for their kindness and his extraordinary ignorance of the ways of the world.

On his return from Bo Peep, Keats joined his brothers in their new lodging in Well Walk, Hampstead. Exactly why the brothers moved there, no one says, but inference is not difficult. Tom was poorly housed in the thick of London smoke for a consumptive, for that he was a consumptive was becoming clearer every day; John found the peace and quiet of a suburb far better to write in than clattering Cheapside; George could reach the City without difficulty, although, as a matter of fact, he does not seem to have been obliged to reach it very long. The first letter to Severn implies that already, at the end of May, he

had no daily engagement in town. George's "pride" does not appear to have accorded well with a clerkship in anybody's employ. Hence the subsequent departure to America, where a man had but to stand on his own feet with energy and perseverance to make a fortune! Oh, the innocence, the pathetic innocence of these boys! How sorely they paid for it!

The landlord of the Well Walk lodging was a postman named Bentley. Bentley, slightly as he is sketched in Keats's letters, gives the impression of having been a good, honest sort of man, and his wife, we are told, was a kind and motherly woman, but the children were a source of some annoyance to Keats. As I have already said, Keats does not seem to have cared much for children. On one occasion, the Bentley children "are making a horrid row"; on another, Keats speaks without enthusiasm of the smell of their damp worsted stockings.

Hampstead was an almost perfect place for Keats to settle in. To be sure, Hunt was no longer in the cottage in the Vale of Health, but, considering Keats's altered feelings toward Hunt, that was rather a boon than otherwise. But, if Hunt had left Hampstead, two friends of his, whom the Keats brothers had already met through him, remained, and both these friends were destined to become very intimate with Keats as time went on, one of them, indeed, to play almost the part of a brother during the last years of Keats's life. These men were Charles Wentworth Dilke and Charles Brown.

Just when Keats first met them is not known, but it was certainly some time during the Winter of 1816–17. There are references to a party at Mrs. Dilke's to which Keats could not go, in the letter which Keats wrote to Reynolds announcing his approaching departure from London in the Spring, but we hear nothing of Brown at that date, although Keats must have made his acquaintance at about the same time that he made Dilke's.

The Dilke family were somewhat higher in the social scale than most of Keats's friends. There were Dilkes of Maxstoke Castle in Warwickshire, and Charles Wentworth Dilke, the father of Keats's friend, was the head of a younger branch of the same family. They were descendants of a Sir Peter Wentworth, who was a member of the High Court of Justice, and of a still older Sir Peter Wentworth, who had married a sister of Sir Francis Walsingham, and was the leader of the Puritan opposition under Queen Elizabeth. Dilke's father, the elder Charles Wentworth, had been in the civil service; but, when Keats knew the family, he had retired to Chichester.

Charles Wentworth Dilke was a young man of twenty-seven when the Keats brothers moved to Hampstead. By profession, he was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, but his tastes were literary. He had edited a series of volumes as a continuation to Dodsley's *Old Plays*, the books appearing at intervals from 1814 to 1816. Dilke was also something of an antiquary, and in politics a confirmed radical, which bias induced him to advocate the repeal of the corn laws in 1821. In 1830, he undertook the editorship of the *Athenæum*, which had been established two years before, but was, at the time, languishing. By his energy and fearlessness, he soon put the paper on its feet and gave it the prominent position it held for many years. Later, in 1846, he became manager of the *Daily News*. In 1862, he left London for Hampshire, where he died in 1864. Dilke was an indefatigable writer on his favourite subjects, but published no books other than his series of edited plays. It was not until ten years after his death that his fugitive essays were gathered together by his grandson, and issued under the title, *Papers of a Critic*.

Dilke had a tidy, but inelastic, mind. He wished to reduce everything to a system and dogmatize from a settled basis. Keats summed him up very neatly in a letter written to his brother George in 1819: "Dilke," he says, "is a

man who cannot feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his mind about everything . . . Dilke will never come at a truth as long as he lives, because he is always trying it." At another time, he calls him "a Godwin-perfectability man." In spite of their total unlikeness of character, Keats and Dilke enjoyed each other's company immensely. Dilke's knowledge of books and antiquities, combined with the genial hospitality of his nature, cannot fail to have made him a pleasant, as well as an interesting, companion, while his appreciation of Blake should have had more of an effect upon Keats than it did, unless, indeed, it dates from a period subsequent to Keats's death. At any rate, a man who could appreciate Blake certainly had much in him by which Keats could profit.

Dilke married early, his son being born in 1810. This boy, the idol of his father's heart, the Charley Dilke of the letters, was therefore only seven when Keats went to live at Hampstead.

Mrs. Dilke, for no account of Dilke is complete without mention of his wife, was evidently a very charming woman. Her enthusiasm about, and friendliness for, Keats duplicated her husband's attitude. But there must have been something about her which did not lure Keats quite as far as it might have done, for, cosily intimate as Keats was with her, she never fell into the place of confidant. Perhaps the fact that Keats encountered Fanny Brawne when his acquaintance with Mrs. Dilke was scarcely more than a year old, a year in which he was much away from Hampstead, may have been the reason, rather than any lack in Mrs. Dilke's character. Her friendship with Keats drifted into one with his sister Fanny, to whom she was very attentive after Keats's death, and this friendship with Fanny Keats she kept up for years. Mrs. Dilke had a little frailty which gives the memory of her a delightfully human touch; she was unpunctual, never ready when called for by

appointment, no matter what the appointment were for. So we see the Dilke family: Dilke, Mrs. Dilke, and little Charley; a domestic *milieu* which was destined to crowd out that of the Reynoldses', quite as the Reynoldses' had crowded out the Matthews'.

Some time previous to 1817, Dilke, and a friend and schoolfellow of his, Charles Brown, had built a house together at the foot of John Street, Hampstead. It was of the sort which we should now call a "two-family house," each half quite separate from the other, but both covered by one roof. This double house stood — still stands,[1] in fact, although alterations have done away with its double character — in a garden of a comfortable size, where grew several fine trees, among them, a plum of no mean dimensions. This plum we shall meet again later on. The house and garden were named Wentworth Place, a proud little tribute paid by Dilke to the memory of his important ancestors.

Charles Brown, who occupied the lesser half of the structure dedicated to the glorious, but defunct, Wentworths, was a bachelor. And here let me say that Sir Sidney Colvin is quite right in declaring that the interpolated middle name of Armitage, which Brown adopted in later life, is absolutely out of place when speaking of him at this time. Charles Brown, he was, pure and simple, in those days, and for a long time after. How and why he became Charles Armitage Brown will appear presently. Considering that Brown was not, in himself, by any means a distinguished man, we really know a good deal about him. Even more than Severn, he lives for later generations solely because he was Keats's friend. It should, however, be remembered that of all his friends, Brown was the one to whom Keats clung most closely from the time of Tom Keats's death until his own. I do not think that Brown

[1] It has recently been acquired by the Keats Memorial Association and is to be kept in perpetuity as a Keats museum.

entirely justified Keats's love for him, I think he failed on more than one important occasion, but something in him drew and held Keats. Circumstance threw the two men into an intimate relation, and Keats, with his pathetic desire for relations, put Brown, as far as possible, into the place left empty by Tom's death and George's emigration to America.

Charles Brown was born in Lambeth in 1786. He was the sixth son of his father, a Scotch stock-broker settled in London. As sons were plentiful in the family and money was not, Brown found himself, at fourteen, perched upon a stool in a counting-house, earning forty pounds a year. An older brother, John, was in business as a "Russia merchant," as the term then was. The firm's activities consisted in the importation of Russian products to be sold in England. When Charles was only eighteen, John took him into partnership, and sent him to St. Petersburg to represent the firm at the Russian end. At first affairs went well with the brothers, but a large purchase of bristles fell dead on their hands owing to the great competition of split whalebone, then a newly invented substitute, and bankruptcy was the result. Brown returned to London, penniless, about 1810, and for some time was miserably poor. He is said to have existed on one meal a day, which he got for fourpence at an ordinary where the knives and forks were chained to the table.[1] But if one brother had failed him, another came to his rescue. This brother, James, was one of that corps of local "residents" set up by the East India Company in those various districts of India under its control. James, who had made good use of the opportunities of his position and acquired a reasonable competence, made Charles his London agent. Shortly after, James returned to England broken down in health, and, on his death a few months later, Charles found himself the possessor of the competence aforesaid. This meant,

[1] Unpublished Memoir by his son, C. A. Brown. Day Collection.

not riches, but comfort, if Charles spent carefully. He had no wish to embark again in business, the plethoric bristles were too fresh in his mind; he sat himself down to live on his means, which he eked out by contributing occasional papers to periodicals. One stroke of quasi-luck he did have, however. He wrote the libretto of an opera, the music of which was supplied by Braham and Reeve. *Narensky, or the Road to Yaroslaf* was performed at Drury Lane in 1814, with Braham in the title rôle. Braham's popularity carried the piece through several performances, which earned for Brown three hundred pounds and free admission to Drury Lane for life. But even Braham could not keep the opera on the boards; it disappeared promptly, and nothing more was to be hoped from it. Yet, as it was, Brown, who had a sturdy sense of humour, declared he had got more than his share of the thing was worth, and destroyed every copy of the libretto (it had been published) which he could lay his hands on. At the time that Keats met him, he was living the life of a dilettante writer, rather hoping to strike out something good, but with no particular expectation of doing so, and not really trying very hard for a prize he knew beyond his reach.

Brown's life in the years when he knew Keats is without external incident, except as regards one thing. In 1819, apparently without Keats's knowledge, he travelled to Ireland and married a young peasant woman named Abigail Donohue,[1] who, there is some reason to think, had been a servant in Brown's house. The marriage, being performed by a Catholic priest, was illegal, but the woman, who was a Catholic, was perfectly satisfied. Brown never seems to have had any intention of acknowledging the marriage, or of living with his wife, and we hear nothing of her making any objection to the arrangement of separate existences. A son was born to the couple in 1820, and for two years Brown left him with his mother. At the end of

[1] Unpublished Memoir by his son, C. A. Brown. Day Collection.

that time, he obtained possession of the boy, and immediately left for Italy, fearing, says his son, that the mother "might appeal to Chancery to give her legal custody of the boy, on the same grounds that Shelley had been deprived of his children." The marriage seems to have been an odd transaction altogether, and points to a kink in Brown's mind more in accordance with eighteenth century ideas than with those of his own day. Brown does not appear to have cared a snap for the woman, but he was devoted to his child, which certainly has the look of a preconcerted, scientific plan to provide himself with a son who should inherit intellectual ability from him, but who should also enjoy the advantage of strong, healthy peasant blood. Brown hoped to give him both brain and brawn by this means, but the experiment was not pre-eminently successful apparently, at least as regards the first of these qualities.

I can find no mention anywhere of what Brown's friends knew, suspected, or thought; but, from 1822 to 1834, Brown presented the strange spectacle of a middle-aged English gentleman wandering over Italy with a small boy attached to his coat-tails. Of course, this was after Keats's death; Keats himself, I am certain, never knew of Brown's marriage, or of the birth of his child.

The Italian years were pleasant ones for Brown, who was an excellent Italian scholar. He read, he wrote, he taught his son. He met Byron, and became intimate with Landor and Trelawny; indeed, he and Trelawny lived together for a while, and he re-wrote Trelawny's *Adventures of a Younger Son* and put it into shape for publication, a task that Mrs. Shelley had attempted and given up as impossible. In 1834, Brown returned to England and settled in Plymouth, in order that his son might have the benefit of a thorough-going British education before it was too late. In Plymouth, Brown continued to busy himself with desultory writing. He printed various of Keats's

unpublished poems in his possession in the *New Monthly Magazine*, edited a Plymouth weekly paper, and lectured on Shakespeare and Keats. So long before as 1829, he had projected writing a life of Keats, but when he did finally write it in the abbreviated form of a short biographical sketch, it was rejected by both the *Morning Chronicle* and the booksellers. The only approach to it was an account of the first part of the Scotch tour which he and Keats had taken in 1818. This account he printed in several numbers of the *Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal* in 1840.

Brown's best-known work was a volume entitled *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems. Being his Sonnets clearly developed: with his Character drawn chiefly from his Works.* The book was published by Bohn of London in 1838, and on the title-page, Brown, for the first time, styled himself Charles Armitage Brown. His son's account of the reason for this is amusing: "He assumed the name of Armitage, a family name on the mother's side, when he published 'Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems' — bearing in mind what Trelawny said to him, 'Brown, your name is that of a tribe, not a family.'" [1]

For various reasons, as time went on, Brown became dissatisfied with Plymouth and decided to emigrate to New Zealand, to which end he took up a government grant in New Plymouth, now Taranaki, North Island. Realizing that such a move ended all possibility of his writing a life of Keats, he made over his papers relative to the subject to Lord Houghton before he went, which papers Lord Houghton made good use of, and they have been a chief source of information to subsequent biographers. The land grant satisfactorily settled, Brown sent his son ahead to prepare the way, following himself a few months later, in 1841. At first, he rather enjoyed the change, but the lack of congenial society, and the dearth of newspapers

[1] Unpublished Memoir by his son, C. A. Brown. Day Collection.

and periodicals, soon discouraged him, and he made up his mind to return to England, a journey he was destined never to take. Before his arrangements could be completed, he had an attack of apoplexy in which he died in 1842. His grave, for many years lost, was discovered in 1921.

In 1817, Brown was an agreeable, rather full-fleshed, man of thirty-one, with a bald head, side whiskers, and spectacles. He was extremely active and robust, a large eater, and with a strong liking for the good things of this world. Although not without a streak of coarseness, Brown had a keen love for genuine poetry. He was an indefatigable copyist of Keats's poems, running Woodhouse hard in this direction. A warm friend, a genial companion, with immovable prejudices — "his odd dislikes," Keats calls them — there was much to like in Brown, and a good deal to deplore. He could be generous, he was scrupulously honest, but his honesty was of the kind which makes no allowances for others which he would not permit to himself. Sir Sidney Colvin has given us an admirable picture of him when he says: "a truly Scottish blend of glowing warm-heartedness and 'thrawn' prejudice, of frank joviality and cautious dealing."[1] He lent Keats money, and paid Keats's share of their joint housekeeping when Keats could no longer do so; but, after Keats's death, he came down on George for the entire sum plus interest, which item amounted to something like seventy-two pounds.[2]

Brown liked Keats at once, but he was not a man to push; his eminently tactful method of approach, as he told it to Lord Houghton, was this:

> [3] "I succeeded in making him come often to my house by never asking him to come oftener; and I let him feel himself at perfect liberty there chiefly by avoiding to assure him of the fact."

[1] Colvin.

[2] Note by Dilke in his copy of Lord Houghton's *Life of Keats*, quoted by Buxton Forman.

[3] Houghton Papers, quoted by Buxton Forman.

When we remember Hunt's method, Haydon's method, and recollect how recently Keats had flung himself out of the sentimental farce, we realize a good deal of why Brown's manner of acting worked as it did, and the reason of Brown's strong attraction for him. But Rome was not built in a day, and Brown was little more than a casual acquaintance in the Summer of 1817.

The Summer months of June, July, and August were busy ones for Keats. His Second Book must have absorbed a great deal of his energy, when we think what an exuberance of imagination he poured into it. The pleasure of being once more among his friends was undoubtedly very great, but we have neither letters nor notes to tell us so. The dearth of documents continues. Everybody whom he cared about was in London; but whatever engagements he may have made do not seem to have required epistolary confirmation. We gather more from this silence than would at first seem possible. Keats, in true Alice-in-the-Looking-Glass fashion, had jumped a square. He was in a totally different mood from the one he was in when, three months before, he had quitted London. His First Book had given him a considerable degree of confidence, and he had no desire to go back to the harness of leading strings.

It is largely this complete absence of letters which makes me certain that the Bo Peep sojourn occurred immediately after Canterbury and not later in the Summer. We know that he was alone at Bo Peep, and Keats was never alone very long without writing. Not to write for a few days' holiday is one thing; not to write on a journey undertaken for the purpose of work is another, and that Keats was working hard by Midsummer is evident.

One thing Keats did not do, he did not seek out Hunt. Hunt, having returned from some country jaunt, had settled at Maida Hill, Paddington. Thus he was farther away than at the Vale of Health certainly, but the distance was not so great after all. It had been easy enough to run

out to Hampstead from Cheapside, a few months earlier, but now it was a difficult thing to go from Hampstead to Paddington. This is quite plain from a paragraph in a letter from Hunt to Cowden Clarke written on July first, when Keats had been back at Hampstead for nearly a month. Hunt's allusion to him is: "What has become of Junkets I know not. I suppose Queen Mab has eaten him." [1]

So much for Hunt. As to Haydon, who, so long ago as May, had begged Keats to come back to town in order that he, Haydon, might put Keats's head into his picture, he was at the old stand, painting as usual, but under difficult circumstances. I imagine that the sketch of Keats's head was begun at this time, although Haydon, in his journal, is a little obscure as to just when in 1817 he painted Keats as one of the shouting crowd gathered about the entering Christ. Now Haydon was in a stew this Summer. His eyes were in a shocking condition; he was looking for a new studio; he was in love, with no prospect of being able to marry; he was "in the clutches of the money-lenders." The studio was found at Lisson Grove, North, a street into which Hunt also moved very shortly. The throes of moving over, Haydon departed for Oxford, and it is significant that Keats does not seem to have written a line to him while he was gone. No, the people whom Keats appears to have frequented most during the three months that he was in town were the Reynoldses, for there he again met Bailey, *en route* to spend the first part of the long vacation with friends in the country.

Bailey was a new sensation. Keats was just in the mood for him. The men he had known hitherto, well read and devoted to literature though they were, were none of them scholars. Keats had begun to feel the advantage of well-grounded knowledge. His excellent mind, whipped to a great eagerness by the long effort of creation, was fumbling

[1] *Recollections of Writers* by Charles Cowden Clarke.

for coördination; it demanded a solid basis for its superstructure, and found itself lacking at every turn. The kind of impressionistic substitute for learning which was all he had to guide him was full of holes, and this he realized and keenly regretted. Not that exact knowledge could help the act of creation, but that, with knowledge as a springboard, imagination could leap with more certainty of aim. Then, too, Keats was groping after an ideal, something morally firm and stable, and he thought he discerned in Bailey a type of this solidity. Bailey was a serious-minded young man, preparing for holy orders, and the somewhat broad smear of pedantry that marked his character, which he noticed so little that he made no effort to rid himself of it, did not trouble Keats, because Keats was entirely concerned in delighting in Bailey's other qualities. When, in the sequel, Bailey turned out to be a brass idol with feet of clay, Keats could not forgive him. The truth being that, although Keats may never have reasoned it out to himself, Bailey's defection from the standard which Keats believed him to hold broke a cherished illusion of Keats's heart. If Bailey were not what he had seemed, Bailey was a chipped and useless thing. For another man, Keats could have made allowances, but not for Bailey.

Bailey, this Summer, was a godsend. His whole attitude was new and sustaining. Bailey's account of his and Keats's mutual pleasure in seeing each other is corroborative of this. They took to each other at once. Here is what Bailey says:

> [1] "At the commencement of the long vacation I was again in London, on my way to another part of the country: and it was my intention to return to Oxford early in the vacation for the purpose of reading. I saw much of Keats. And I invited him to return with me to Oxford, and spend as much time as he could afford with me in the

[1] Memoranda sent by Bailey to Lord Houghton, quoted by Sir Sidney Colvin.

silence and solitude of that beautiful place during the absence of the numerous members and students of the University. He accepted my offer, and we returned together."

Benjamin Bailey is the last of Keats's friends whom it is necessary for us to know much about. The sum of Keats's connections, except in one important case, that of Fanny Brawne, completes itself with Bailey. Casual, friendly folk arrive and pass; but Bailey is the last of those whose influence on Keats is marked. After this, Keats's eager receptivity in the matter of added friendships calms down. He already had more friends than falls to the lot of most men. In developing his relations with the men he knew, in solidifying with some, and drifting off with others, his personal life was as full as personal contacts, other than those of love, could make it. In saying this, I am carefully separating his personal, from his artistic, life; where his poetry was concerned, Keats never lost his avidity. In one sense, the two halves of himself were inseparable, and it is really those men who affected him artistically who deserve to rank as his friends. Yet there is another sense in which these two halves of Keats's personality can be divided, for, in the end, he was artistically beholden to no living person, but he never lost that wistful longing for affection which was one of the mainsprings of his character.

Bailey was the son of a Mr. John Bailey of Thorney Abbey in Cambridgeshire, at which place he was born in 1791. He seems to have been a most susceptible young man, falling in love at a rapid and continuous rate. He had wooed several young ladies before his affair with Marianne Reynolds.[1] Dilke states that, in the latter case, he was actually refused, but begged Miss Reynolds to reconsider her answer. She might have remained obdurate, but no chance of announcing her final decision was given her, for Bailey, who had gone on a visit to his friend Gleig's family

[1] See Vol. I, p. 283.

in Scotland in the Summer of 1818, promptly placed his volatile heart at the feet of Miss Hamilton Gleig, a daughter of his host, Bishop Gleig, and this time he was accepted. The Reynolds family seem to have taken Bailey's defection very hard, although there is no reason to suppose that Marianne herself was much troubled. At any rate, she later consoled her pride by becoming engaged to a Mr. Green. It was this behaviour of Bailey's which so upset Keats. His opinion on the matter will appear in due course.

Later in the same Summer of 1818, Bailey settled in a curacy near Carlisle. In 1819, he became vicar of Dallington, in Northamptonshire, a living which he held until 1822. For some years after this, his career is obscure, although we know that he was, at one time, private chaplain to Lord Hawke, and, at another, rector of Minster, Kent. The next authentic knowledge of him is as Senior Chaplain of the Island of Ceylon, a post which he was filling in 1831. For twenty years, beginning in 1832, he was the Chaplain of St. Peter's Fort, Colombo, but a bitter disagreement with his bishop led to his return to England, where he died in 1853.[1]

Bailey was an omnivorous reader. Keats writes to him: "I should not like to be pages in your way; when in a tolerable hungry mood you have no mercy. Your teeth are the Rock Tarpeian down which you capsize epic poems like mad." Bailey's chief enthusiasm was for Milton, with Wordsworth as a close second.

It has been the fashion of biographers to speak highly of Bailey on very insufficient data. I have had the good fortune to read a number of his letters to Taylor in which he speaks of Keats,[2] and the impression left upon me by their perusal is not altogether pleasant. The pedant and

[1] This account of Bailey is partly derived from unpublished letters in the Day Collection.

[2] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

the prig are very much in evidence, and there is a touch of hypocritical prudery, a specimen of which I gave in the last chapter, that is not alluring. These letters cover a period of two years between February, 1818, and February, 1821. I shall give such bits of them as seem important when we reach the periods to which they belong.

I have said that there is a dearth of documents relating to this Summer. So there is, as far as letters are concerned, but for printed matter, it is another thing, as Leigh Hunt's belated criticism of the *Poems* suddenly began to appear. The first instalment was printed in the *Examiner* on June first, entitled *Poems by John Keats*. It begins by stating that the volume in question is by the author of the various sonnets signed "J. K.," which had appeared in the *Examiner* from time to time. Hunt next tells how, before he knew Keats, he had read some of his work, adding, mendaciously, that even earlier than this he had printed one of the sonnets. So much said, Hunt veers to his chief preoccupation: the immediate poetry revival. This first instalment is really only an introduction, done in much the same style as his opening in the article, *Young Poets*, of the previous December. Hunt grinds his favourite axe stoutly, but we need not reiterate his thrice-told tale, it has already been given in reference to *Rimini* and the December article. His diatribe in this introduction ends with this florid declaration:

> "The rich and enchanted ground of real poetry, fertile with all that English succulence could produce, bright with all that Italian sunshine could lend, and haunted with exquisite humanities, had become invisible to mortal eyes like the garden of Eden:
>
> 'And from that time those Graces were not found.'"

Here the article stops abruptly, without returning to Keats. Was this "pussy-footing" on Hunt's part? I do verily believe it was. Why did he wait so long to review

the book of his cherished disciple? I cannot help thinking that, unkind as this delay in coming to Keats's rescue in print may seem, it was really prompted by the knowledge that no championing of his could do Keats otherwise than harm. Yet one cannot very well leave a satellite forever in the hands of despoilers, something to succour him must be done before long. It was a ticklish business, and I think Hunt shirked it as long as he could, and then came out with this oblique article in which nothing to the point was said. The paper breaks off with the formula: "To be concluded next week." But not the next week, nor, indeed, until five weeks had passed, did Hunt continue his review. A natural conjecture is that this resumption of an apparently abandoned theme was owing to the fact that he had heard nothing from Keats for months, as we have just seen, and very probably considered that this silence was in part due to his own obvious unwillingness to write any more of his article.

In the second instalment, which appeared on July sixth, Hunt plumps into his neglected train of thought as though his readers had dwelt with it all the while. Naïvely, then, considering the lapse of five weeks, he starts his second paper in this remarkable manner:

> "These Graces, however, are reappearing; and one of the greatest evidences is the little volume before us."

After enlarging somewhat, to point his argument, Hunt fairly begins his review by generalizing about Keats with insight and tact. This passage I give in full:

> "We do not, of course, mean to say, that Mr. Keats has as much talent as he will have ten years hence, or that there are no imitations in his book, or that he does not make mistakes common to inexperience; — the reverse is inevitable at his time of life. In proportion to our ideas, or impressions of the images of things, may be our acquaintance with the things themselves. But our author has all

> the sensitiveness of temperament requisite to receive these impressions; and wherever he has turned hitherto, he has evidently felt them deeply.
>
> The very faults indeed of Mr. Keats arise from a passion for beauties, and a young impatience to vindicate them; and as we have mentioned these, we shall refer to them at once."

These faults are, Hunt thinks, first a tendency to accord a disproportionate space to detail; and second, "a sense of the proper variety of versification without a due consideration of its principles."

We need not follow Hunt into his illustrations to his first proposition; they are more idiosyncratic than universal. For his second censure, he is content to cite one example: the first line in *How many bards*.

In coming to the beauties, Hunt is on better and surer ground for the exercise of his own particular critical gift. No more penetrating criticism of the excellencies of Keats's poetry could be made than this summary with which he starts his catalogue of "beauties":

> "Their characteristics indeed are a fine ear, a fancy and imagination at will, and an intense feeling of external beauty in its most natural and least expressible simplicity."

Again, what shrewder paraphrase could be given of *I Stood Tip-toe* than "The first poem consists of a piece of luxury in a rural spot."

Following these generalities, Hunt sets down various illustrations, among them are the "noiseless noise," the "youngling tree," the marigolds, and the moon coming into the blue with a "gradual swim" — all from *I Stood Tip-toe*. It is amusing to note that every one of these selected "beauties," except the second, were underscored by George Keats in his copy of the *Poems*.[1] From *Calidore*, Hunt quotes:

[1] Author's Collection. See Vol. I, pp. 143–144, and Appendix C.

"... fir trees grow around,
Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground."

Of this passage, he says: "This last line is in the taste of Greek simplicity," which, curiously enough, for Keats is so seldom in the least Greek, it is. A few more quotations, not so happy as these, and Hunt ends his second section as abruptly as though his manuscript had been slashed into with a pair of scissors.

The third, and last, paper was published a week later, on July thirteenth. In it, Hunt reviews briefly the *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, glances at a sonnet or two, announces that "The best poem is certainly the last and longest, entitled *Sleep and Poetry*," from which he quotes fifty-five lines, and seizes the opportunity of Keats's verses on the subject of poetry to end, as he had begun, with animadversions on those poets whose ways are not his — this time, the Lake Poets. By this return to his ever-present irritation, we see that Hunt lost no means to advance his theories; and excellent and just though his review is, and handsome tribute as he certainly meant it to be, it smells of propaganda, and must be taken, for all its skilful criticism, as very much a piece of special pleading, which proves why it did not help Keats's reputation as it would have done had it been written by a critic with no personal interests to forward.

How Keats took this spasmodically printed review, we have no means of knowing. But there is a very broad hint of his attitude towards it in the fact that his recently written sonnet, *On the Sea*, was published in the *Champion* on August seventeenth. This was the first of Keats's poems to appear in any paper other than the *Examiner*, and the chances are that Keats took the poem to John Scott, the editor, for the best of all possible reasons, to free himself from Hunt's ægis, and advise the reading public that he did not exist solely in the shadow of Hunt's

fostering wing. It is now fairly clear what induced Hunt to print the already published sonnet, *On the Grasshopper and the Cricket*, in the following September. We may take his doing so, apart from the reason I have already given [1] of providing a foil to his own sonnet on the same subject, as a sort of declaration of ownership. If he were in the slightest degree hurt at Scott's getting the opportunity to publish *On the Sea*, his friendship was, nevertheless, sincere; and it is no more than fair to see in his action a desire to keep his relations with Keats on the most cordial terms. Since he had nothing new of Keats's to use, he made this published sonnet serve a triple purpose.

The period of the year was now approaching when Londoners, if they can, go out of town. George and Tom purposed tripping to Paris, but John naturally did not want to break up his work on *Endymion* and so decided not to go with them. Shelley invited him to stay at Great Marlow, but Keats refused, "in order," he told Bailey afterwards, "that I might have my own unfettered scope." The truth is that Keats was feeling his way. His newly acquired conviction that Hunt had hampered him, made him certain that he had best go alone. He wanted sympathy, but he by no means wanted to be lectured. And there he was quite right; it was both too late and too early to give him advice. He was just at a point where he had, of necessity, to codify his recently discovered possibilities; he must weigh, retain, reject. He must seize the opportunities which farther seeing and clearer understanding were opening out before him. He must, in short, prove himself. He did not want to break what coherence *Endymion* had; and he felt, not without reason, that it did have some coherence, being all spun out of himself. But he knew himself too sensitive still to risk the effect of alien inquiries and suggestions. He must be in a congenial atmosphere or his little sproutling of a poem would shrink and shrivel.

[1] See Vol. I, p. 238.

With Bailey, he felt safe. Much as Bailey read, his writing was confined to a few mild literary essays and prospective sermons. Keats had nothing to fear from an impinging poetic personality. That Keats reckoned a little too wide of the mark in thinking that no personality save a poetic one could affect his work, we have seen in the last chapter. But, if Keats ever realized this, he certainly had no inkling of it when Bailey's invitation opened before him the pleasant alternative of Oxford to solitary lodgings in Hampstead.

It was probably on either September second or third that Keats and Bailey went to Oxford, going down by the Oxford and Cheltenham day coach "Defiance," which started from the Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, at the pleasantly early hour of a quarter before eight in the morning and reached the Mitre Inn, Oxford, at three that same afternoon. No better time for a first sight of Oxford than three o'clock on a bright September afternoon could well be devised. Bailey's rooms were in Magdalen Hall, and here the two young men settled themselves forthwith to enjoy a few weeks of strenuous work and high companionship. Keats was excellently situated at Oxford. The town was slumbering in the quiet of the Long Vacation, and the absence of the usual throng of undergraduates saved him from feeling too much of an outsider. The beauty of the halls and colleges clustered among green trees solaced his eyes and his mind, and the atmosphere of leisure, books, wisdom, and security, gave him the sense of walking in a soothing and temperate air. He was abundantly happy. A couple of days after reaching Oxford, he writes a letter of bubbling nonsense to Marianne and Jane Reynolds, who had gone to the seaside village of Littlehampton for the usual Londoner's holiday. Here is Oxford, and Keats in it, so effervescing with good spirits that everything (on the surface) is sheer fun:

> "... here am I among Colleges, halls, Stalls, Plenty of trees, thank God — Plenty of water, thank heaven —

> Plenty of Books, thank the Muses — Plenty of Snuff, thank Sir Walter Raleigh — Plenty of segars, — Ditto — Plenty of Flat country, thank Tellus's rolling pin — I'm on the sofa — Buonaparte is on the snuff-box."

So he races along, higgledy-piggledy, cloaking his impressions under a whirl of irresponsible gaiety. I have interpolated the little qualification, "on the surface," with intention. On the surface, Keats plays his joking banter right heartily; but all the time, underneath the surface, he was soaking in new sights, new thoughts, mellowing like a peach on a South wall. If Oxford soothed, it also startled. This was a city of the past. Along these tree-shaded paths, and in and out of these echoing halls, the poets of his predilection might have walked. Over these glorious, unimaginable buildings presided a dignity which his jostled, and rather ragged, life had never known. Not being able, by the exigences of his poem, to write of Oxford, he wrote of the moon, and the kinship between the two is not hard to seek, if we look into Keats's mind. Both moon and Oxford mean peace and supreme beauty.

A week after his arrival, he writes to his little sister Fanny, in a less rollicking strain than he had written to the Reynolds girls certainly, but much to the same purpose:

> "This Oxford I have no doubt is the finest City in the world — it is full of old Gothic buildings — Spires — towers — Quadrangles — Cloisters — Groves &c. and is surrounded by more clear streams than ever I saw together. I take a Walk by the Side of one of them every Evening, and, thank God, we have not had a drop of rain these many days."

No rain! A parlous thing for England, who had, the year before, experienced one of the worst seasons in her history, a season of cold and drought when there should have been warmth and showers, and cold and wet when the harvest was being reaped. This condition had raised the price of

bread to a height which caused acute distress to the lower classes. Now, in 1817, the country needed the present harvest to be more than usually bountiful. But Keats never considered this, he considered only the great splashes of sunlight lying beyond cool doorways, the slants of sunlight catching ancient spires, the glitter of sun-touched water sparkling the faces of meadows. If the country needed grain, he needed sun, the bright sun of a cloudless sky, bewitching beautiful things to an even greater beauty. The rainless weeks made Oxford, to him, a veritable *Paradisus in Sole.*

The mood engendered by all these things was a sane, peaceful, and purposeful outlook on life. Keats seemed to himself lifted into a poetical sphere where art joins with intelligence to make a full-sided whole. In such a sphere, the old poets must have dwelt to write as they did. The flurry of modern artistic circles, fuming and fretting against this or that pettiness and themselves pettishly rebellious of misunderstanding and neglect, shrank to the merest wind-puff of dust particles when compared with the silent, stately, abiding eloquence standing in rows on the shelves of the Bodleian. Oxford was to Keats what the woods were to Emerson when he described them as looking down on a fussing, hurrying human creature with the comment: "So hot, my little Sir!" Just so did Oxford speak to Keats. Do I make use of a strange epithet when I say that Keats's mood was almost a domestic one? His surroundings turned him back to the innate, persisting things, things like the unalterable ties of blood, for instance. Seen in this light, it is most natural that the first of Keats's letters to his sister Fanny, that series of letters which show us what is perhaps the sweetest and most lovable side of him, should have been written from Oxford.

Bailey, in the Memoranda sent to Lord Houghton, testifies to Keats's preoccupation with his sister at this time, and inadvertently reveals that little Fanny was the

innocent, childish thread of a dream woof of even more beautiful possibilities. Bailey's words are:

> [1] "He had a truly poetic feeling for women; and he often spoke to me of his sister, who was somehow withheld from him, with great delicacy and tenderness of affection."

The withholding was, in fact, only too true. Dull-witted Mr. Abbey had conceived the opinion that Keats was a bad influence for his sister. In Abbey's opinion, a man who could act as Keats had done, who could fling away his opportunity of becoming a member of a worthy and lucrative profession to follow the will-o'-the-wisp chances of poetry, was almost an abandoned character. He was too ignorant to know the reputations of the men whose society Keats frequented. Like many Britishers of the lower middle class during the last century, he shuddered at the name "artist," and experienced at the mere thought of men devoting their lives to such bagatelles as painting pictures or writing verses a kind of nameless fear. John was one of the crew, and therefore he was undoubtedly bad, if indeed, he were not mad; and it is probable that Abbey would have felt much easier in his mind could his recalcitrant ward have been proved hopelessly insane. That, at least would not have been blameworthy, or due to any error of his guardian's bringing up. Such intercourse as he allowed between Fanny and John was of the most meagre kind. But, at this period, he seems not to have objected to their exchanging letters, as he did later on.

In this first letter, Keats sets out his purpose clearly. It is that he and Fanny shall keep up a regular correspondence to make up, as far as may be, for the infrequence of their meetings. This is how he puts it:

> "Let us now begin a regular question and answer — a little pro and con; letting it interfere as a pleasant method of my coming at your favourite little wants and enjoy-

[1] Colvin.

ments, that I may meet them in a way befitting a brother.

We have been so little together since you have been able to reflect on things that I know not whether you prefer the History of King Pepin to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress — or Cinderella and her glass slipper to Moor's Almanack. However in a few letters I hope I shall be able to come at that and adapt my scribblings to your Pleasure. You must tell me about all you read if it be only six Pages in a Week and this transmitted to me every now and then will procure you full sheets of Writing from me pretty frequently. — This I feel as a necessity for we ought to become intimately acquainted, in order that I may not only, as you grow up love you as my only Sister, but confide in you as my dearest friend."

The wistfulness of Keats's suggestion is pathetic. Here again is the old story: that longing for a woman in whom he can confide; that need of a sister, one of the great, compelling needs of his life. Fanny is too young still, as he realizes (she was only fourteen), but he seeks to build up such a relation between them that, by the time she has developed to the point of understanding him, she will unconsciously have stepped into the empty place in his heart and be quite ready to function toward him in the capacity he so much desires. Now, at Oxford, this sister-need is imperious, and Fanny, just growing old enough to talk to — about some things, at any rate — is very much in his mind.

Toward the end of the letter, he comes back to his charge:

"Now Fanny you must write soon — and write all you think about, never mind what — only let me have a good deal of your writing."

Fanny must have obeyed, for the "full sheets of writing" which he promises to send her "pretty frequently" in answer, she certainly got. The letters are constant with inquiries as to what she would like him to send her — books, pencils, drawing-paper, plants, even the advisability

of a flageolet is discussed. He lets his fun run over in these letters, they fairly ripple with enchanting nonsense, and are full of a solicitous tenderness for the little girl and every small thing about her life.

Here I must abandon chronology for a moment and give a few excerpts from these letters to Fanny. They reveal a certain side of Keats as nothing else does, and without this side no portrait of him is complete. Keats regarded the Abbeys as a sort of ogres, and Fanny does not seem to have been happy with them. This Oxford letter is addressed to her at "Miss Kaley's School," which looks as though Keats preferred not to send his letters to Mr. Abbey's house. As the school was in Walthamstow, where Abbey lived, this method of address, even if Fanny were a boarder, seems odd without some such explanation.

Keats may not have cared for children in general, but he cared very much for Fanny, and he knew perfectly how to please her. In one of these letters he asks her a profoundly important question, as follows:

> "On looking at your seal I cannot tell whether it is done or not with a Tassie — it seems to me to be paste. As I went through Leicester Square lately I was going to call and buy you some, but not knowing but you might have some I would not run the chance of buying duplicates. Tell me if you have any or if you would like any — and whether you would rather have motto ones like that with which I seal this letter; or heads of great Men such as Shakespeare, Milton, &c. — or fancy pieces of Art; such as Fame, Adonis &c. — those gentry you read of at the end of the English Dictionary."

Keats often speaks of seals, and, as I have already mentioned,[1] he had a great affection for these Tassie "gems." There was a wide range for him to choose from, since the Tassie reproductions ran into thousands of specimens. Those letters of Keats which I have, in which

[1] See Vol. I, p. 115.

the seal impressions are not obliterated, show five different designs; there is a head of Shakespeare, two large heads of worthy gentlemen I cannot identify, a small square containing the torso of a boy, and a beautiful little lyre with two of its strings broken and the rather wistful motto: "*Qui me néglige me désole.*" [1]

Whatever goes to the making of an interesting man is interesting, therefore I feel no scruple for bringing in the seals, nor this most engaging bit in another letter to Fanny, written after waiting for a stage-coach to start:

> "I got to the stage half an hour before it set out and counted the buns and tarts in a Pastry-cook's window and was just beginning with the Jellies."

There the sentence ends and leaves us with our mouths watering.

One more quotation from these letters to his sister, I must give. Its quaintness and charm are, I think, irresistible. It is one of the best examples of this vein in Keats. He is writing from Winchester on an August day:

> "I should like now to promenade round your Gardens — apple-tasting — pear-tasting — plum-judging — apricot nibbling — peach-scrunching — nectarine-sucking and Melon-carving. I have also a great feeling for antiquated cherries full of sugar cracks — and a white currant tree kept for company. I admire lolling on a lawn by a water lillied pond to eat white currants and see gold fish: and go to the Fair in the Evening if I'm good. There is not hope for that — one is sure to get into some mess before evening."

After all this whimsey, comes the loving solicitude after Fanny's welfare, for the letter ends:

> "Have these hot days I brag of so much been well or ill for your health? Let me hear soon —"

[1] See drawing on title-page.

This pursuit of Keats's attitude toward his sister has taken us far afield from Oxford. I propose to scramble back forthwith, by giving Bailey's account of the manner in which the two friends spent their days.[1] Says Bailey:

> "He wrote, and I read, sometimes at the same table, sometimes at separate desks or tables, from breakfast to the time of our going out for exercize, — generally two or three o'clock. He sat down to his task, — which was about 50 lines a day, — with his paper before him, and wrote with as much regularity, and apparently as much ease as he wrote his letters . . . Sometimes he fell short of his allotted task, but not often: and he would make it up another day. But he never forced himself. When he had finished his writing for the day, he usually read it over to me: and he read or wrote letters until we went for a walk. This was our habit day by day."

We can supplement this meagre outline from a sketch in a letter written by Keats to Reynolds on September twenty-first. It is a far more brightly coloured picture:

> "For these last five or six days, we have had a Boat on the Isis, and explored all the streams about, which are more in number than your eye-lashes. We sometimes skim into a Bed of rushes, and there become naturalized river-folks, — there is one particularly nice nest, which we have christened 'Reynolds's Cove,' in which we have read Wordsworth, and talked as may be."

Bailey seems to have been under the impression (which, after all, is not likely to be very accurate, as he was writing thirty years later) that Keats wrote a great many letters while he was at Oxford. If he did so, few of them have descended to us. Two letters to Jane Reynolds, one to Jane and Marianne together, two to their brother, one to Fanny Keats, and one to Haydon, are all we have from Oxford, and, of these, one is a new discovery. In the last chapter,

[1] Bailey Memoranda. Colvin.

I quoted some passages from one of the letters to Jane Reynolds.[1] In that same letter, there is a pleasant little bit of fooling; which is not all fooling, to be sure. The passage runs:

> "Imprimis — I sincerely believe that Imogen is the finest creature, and that I should have been disappointed at having you prefer Juliet — Item — yet I feel such a yearning towards Juliet that I would rather follow her into Pandemonium than Imogen into Paradise — heartily wishing myself a Romeo to be worthy of her, and to hear the Devils quote the old proverb 'Birds of a feather flock together.'"

This mention of Juliet in the letter of September fourteenth, puts the new, undated letter as written after that. As to what it refers, we can only surmise that Jane Reynolds had been twitting Keats about his preference for Juliet. Through the kind permission of the present owner,[2] this letter to Jane Reynolds appears here for the first time in print:

> "My dear Jane:
>
> You must not expect that your Porcupine quill is to be shot at me with impunity — without you mean to question the existence of the Pyramids or rout Sir Thos. Newton out of his Coffin. If I did not think you had a kind of preference yourself for Juliet I would not say a word more about it — but as I know people love to be reminded of those they most love — 'tis with me a certain thing that you are much fishing for a little proing and conning thereon. As to your accusations I perhaps may answer them like Haydon in a postcript. If you go on at this rate I shall always have you in my imagination side by side with Bailey's Picture of Jeremy Taylor who always looks as if he were going to hit me a rap with a Book he hold[s] in a very threatening position.
>
> My head is always in imminent danger. However with

[1] See Vol. I. p. 406.

[2] Mrs. Roland Gage Hopkins, of Brookline, Mass.

the armour of Words and the Sword of Syllables I hope to attack you in a very short time more at length.

My love to Marianne.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN KEATS."

I should, perhaps, say that not only does the mention of "Bailey's Picture of Jeremy Taylor" prove that the letter was written from Oxford, there is also the fact that it is written on a doubling of a letter of Bailey's. For those of my readers who are not accustomed to the folded and sealed letter sheets of a hundred years ago, before the invention of gummed envelopes, I must explain that the "doublings" were the folded-under edges of the last sheet, by means of which the letter itself became an oblong packet, with a plain surface on one side for the address and a flap on the other for the seal.

It is amusing to observe that Keats's absence from Hunt, and also his absence from Haydon's animadversions in respect to Hunt, tend to weaken his dissatisfaction with his former idol. Writing to Reynolds on September twenty-first, he has this to say on the subject:

> "I think I see you and Hunt meeting in the Pit. What a very pleasant fellow he is, if he would give up the sovereignty of a room pro bono. What evenings we might pass with him, could we have him from Mrs. H. Failings I am always rather rejoiced to find in a man than sorry for; they bring us to a Level. He has them, but then his makes-up are very good."

This humourously tolerant attitude toward Hunt's "failings" is evidence that the sentimental farce is now so far behind that Keats is no longer even in the state of revolt and escape. As a free man, a member of no group and adherent of no school, he and Hunt are on a level, and Keats can afford to make allowances.

We have only to glance back a year, two years, to see how

immeasurably Keats has advanced in the time. Not only poetically; he is infinitely more mature, less open to pressure from without, more capable of judgement in every way. Think of the boy who came to London in September, 1815; think of the young fellow who, a year later, came back from Margate, full of an eager desire to renew his acquaintance with the author of *Rimini*; and think of him now, set fair toward poetry, a poetry of thews and muscle, of clarity and precision. Not that he had yet achieved it, but that he knew it was a thing he must achieve. His gradual growth can be minutely followed in his letters. No biography can do more than add marginal notes to them.

We cannot do better here than return to Bailey's Memoranda, which record various details of the interminable conversations the two young men indulged in during all that halcyon month. They are fragmentary, of course, just scraps which stuck in Bailey's mind, and probably somewhat coloured by Bailey's own opinions; but, even so, they are most important. The italics are Bailey's and refer presumably to those lines in the poems quoted which Keats admired.

[1] "Our conversation rarely or never flagged, during our walks, or boatings, or in the evening. And I have retained a few of his opinions on Literature and criticism which I will detail. The following passage from Wordsworth's Ode on Immortality was deeply felt by Keats, who however at this time seemed to me to value this great Poet rather in particular passages than in the full-length portrait, as it were, of the great imaginative and philosophical Christian Poet, which he really is, and which Keats obviously, not long afterwards, felt him to be.

> Not for these I raise
> The song of thanks and praise;
> But for those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;

[1] Bailey Memoranda. Colvin.

> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized,
> *High instincts, before which our mortal nature*
> Did tremble like a guilty thing surprized.

The last lines he thought were quite awful in their application to a guilty finite creature, like man, in the appalling nature of the feeling which they suggested to a thoughtful mind. Again, we often talked of that noble passage in the lines on *Tintern Abbey*: —

> That blessed mood,
> In which the *burthen of the mystery*,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened.

And his references to this passage are frequent in his letters. — But in those exquisite stanzas,

> She dwelt among the untrodden ways,
> Beside the springs of Dove.

ending, —

> She lived unknown and few could know
> When Lucy ceased to be;
> But she is in her grave, and oh,
> *The difference to me.*

The simplicity of the last line he declared to be the most perfect pathos."

I am afraid we must take some of Bailey's statements in the foregoing passage with a grain of salt. It is quite evident that the young aspirant for clerical orders read into Keats's remarks some of his own predilections, and that the middle-aged clergyman who recollected them went even farther astray. Keats certainly preferred Wordsworth in his lyrical moods to Wordsworth philosophically inclined, although, under Bailey's tuition, he was beginning to probe a little deeper into the domain of philosophical speculation. But Keats's philosophizing, when he

arrived at it, was of a totally different kind from Wordsworth's. Wordsworth was, as Bailey says, a Christian poet; Keats was only Christian in the sense that a man must be who has been brought up in a Christian country and habituated from his earliest years to the teaching of a Christian sect. In so far as Christianity has modified social laws and customs, Keats was a Christian, but in no other way. His gradual drifting away from the Christian religion, indeed from any religion, was in him an evolution, not a revolution. Wordsworth stood to him as a type of great poet and far-seeing man, the dogma in which Wordsworth encased his opinions, the idiom in which he presented them, were to Keats unimportant superfluities. It does not take a great deal of understanding to see that in the instance quoted by Bailey, Keats was criticizing Wordsworth's poetical content, Bailey his ethical. Keats saw in the lines italicized by Bailey a felicity of poetic expression, while to Bailey these same lines were fraught with the truths of religious faith. Man is a finite creature to the believer and the unbeliever alike; but he is a guilty finite creature only to the former. Nothing that we know of Keats permits us for a moment to suppose that he ever regarded mankind from this point of view. The last four lines of the first quotation given by Bailey translate too well into Keats's own state of mind, confronted by all the newly opened mental and imaginative vistas raying out before him, for us to ignore them in this connection. The same thing is true of the second quotation. "The burthen of the mystery" is excellent as phrase and description both; and, as both, Keats undoubtedly acclaimed it, but without any specific dogmatic significance. A little later, it became one of his favourite expressions, standing for its actual meaning shorn of all doctrinal bias.

It cannot be too much insisted upon that Keats was not a Christian poet, employing the word in its usual orthodox sense. His was a strongly religious nature, but the re-

ligion he harboured was a highly individualized form of satisfaction in ignorance. He believed in the "principle of beauty" and the wisdom of virtue, but beyond these shadowy outlines of truth he was content not to go. He was the type of man who holds to a visionary clue flung out from himself and projected into the unknown. To such a man, the ideal is a magnified essence of his own finest qualities; the difference between him and the devotees of creeds is that, where he is satisfied to leave everything vague and fluid, they must needs crystallize and announce an actuality.

Before long, we shall find Keats profoundly speculating on these things, and even using Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* to point his argument, but I do not wish to give these speculations a year earlier than he seems to have arrived at them. They belong to his mental attitude in 1818, not in 1817, although the germ of them was undoubtedly at work in the Oxford days. It is, however, precisely from these later expressed opinions of Keats that I have deduced his attitude toward religion.

That I am right in my supposition as to how and why Bailey misunderstood Keats's criticisms, is shown by the last quotation, where the underscored line is important in its dramatic sense alone.

Another conversation recollected by Bailey concerns the passage in Wordsworth's *Excursion* referring to Grecian mythology:

> ". . . Fancy fetched
> Even from the blazing chariot of the Sun
> A beardless youth who touched a golden lute,
> And filled the illumined groves with ravishment."

In Bailey's words, "Keats said this description of Apollo should have ended at the 'golden lute,' and have left the imagination to complete the picture, how he 'filled the illumined groves.'" In this criticism, we see how very well

Keats was beginning to understand the value of suggestion as a factor in poetry. Bailey also recalls that "Keats was an ardent admirer of Chatterton," and continues:

> [1] "Methinks now I hear him recite, or chant, in his peculiar manner, the following stanza of the Roundelay sung by the minstrels of Ella: —
>
> *Come with acorn cup and thorn*
> Drain my hertys blood away;
> Life and all its good I scorn;
> Dance by night or feast by day.
>
> The first line to his ear possessed great charm."

The first line charms for two reasons: one is that strange, elusive English presentation of sylvan things, a grace which cannot be analyzed; the other lies in the alternations of the "u" and "o" sounds, and the alliterative "c's" and "th's," the softness of the effect being relieved by the sharp "p" in the middle.

Apparently Bailey was the only one of Keats's friends who did much probing into his method of composition. In connection with Bailey's remembrance of Keats's pleasure in this line of Chatterton's, it is interesting to know that

> "One of his favourite topics of discourse was the principle of melody in verse, upon which he had his own notions, particularly in his management of open and close vowels . . . It was, that the vowels should be so managed as not to clash with one another, so as to hear the melody, — and yet that they should be interchanged, like differing notes of music to prevent monotony . . ."

There does not seem to be anything very remarkable about that. I think every respectable poet, since time was, has had the same theory, if such it deserves to be called. I have not had access to Bailey's manuscript myself, so I must

[1] Bailey Memoranda. Colvin.

take Sir Sidney Colvin's word for it that "Bailey here tries to reconstruct and illustrate from memory Keats's theory of vowel sounds, but his attempt falters and breaks down." [1] Lord Houghton has given us one more sentence, paraphrased from Bailey, to the effect that "all sense of monotony was to be avoided, except when expressive of a special purpose." But that idea also is universal. That Keats had a theory is evident, and it is equally evident, from what we know of Keats, that it was not the platitudinous stuff here recorded, but the most evident thing of all is that Bailey had forgotten everything about it except that it had existed. Lord Houghton's remarks on the results of Keats's practice of his theory are more conclusive than anything we know of the theory itself. They are:

> "Uniformity of metre is so much the rule of English poetry, that, undoubtedly, the carefully varied harmonies of Keats's verse were disagreeable, even to cultivated readers, often producing exactly the contrary impression from what was intended."

How hard, how desperately hard, is the way of the experimenter in art! How cruelly do those persons, whose blunt-edged senses cannot keep pace with his alert ones, treat such a man! Keats was, all his life, an experimenter. He knew his English public, but he changed his ways not a jot to placate them. Has he not said: "One of the great reasons that the English have produced the finest writers in the world is, that the English world has ill-treated them during their lives and foster'd them after their deaths." But this was after he had learnt to comfort himself with the wry smile of irony.

How did Keats write? What were his methods of composition? In what manner did his poems get themselves actually put down on paper? We have seen a little of his way of work, from time to time, but this seems a good place to consider the subject more in detail.

I have in my possession a manuscript in Woodhouse's handwriting which I take to be one of the many notes on various aspects of Keats that he was forever jotting down. This paper is, in many ways, so untrue to fact that I cannot help thinking that when Keats gave him the data for it, as he seems to have done, he was, as the term is, gently "pulling Woodhouse's leg." It would not be an uncharacteristic gesture, where Woodhouse was concerned. Yet the paper has interesting things in it, and as I have never seen it anywhere, I believe it to be unpublished. I shall, therefore, quote it practically in full. It bears no title, nor date, and begins without any preamble:

> "These lines give some insight into Keats's mode of writing Poetry. He has repeatedly said in conversation that he never sits down to write, unless he is full of ideas, and then thoughts come about him in troops as though soliciting to be accepted and he selects (One of his maxims is that if Poetry does not come naturally it had better not come at all). The moment he feels any dearth he discontinues writing and waits for a happier moment. He is generally more troubled by redundancy than by a poverty of images, and he culls what appears to him at the time the best. — He never corrects, unless perhaps a word here or there should occur to him as preferable to an expression he has already used — He is impatient of correcting and says he would rather burn the piece in question and write another or something else. 'My judgment' (he says) 'is as active while I am actually writing as my imagination. In fact all my faculties are strongly excited and in their full play — and shall I afterwards, when my imagination is idle, and the heat in which I wrote has gone off, sit down coldly to criticize when in possession of only one faculty what I have written when almost inspired.' This fact explains the reason of the perfectness, fullness, richness and completion of most that comes from him. He has said that he has often not been aware of the beauty of some thought or expression until after he had composed and written it down — It has then struck him with astonishment and seemed rather the

production of another person than his own. He has wondered how he came to hit upon it. This was the case with the description of Apollo in the 3rd book of 'Hyperion' . . . It seemed to come by chance or magic — to be as it were something given to him."

There is more, but nothing of importance, and we have enough to see both the substratum of truth and the overwork of nonsense of which it is composed. That Keats ever said the things here attributed to him, as they stand, it is ridiculous to suppose. Whatever Keats was, he was no prig. He certainly did believe that poetry which did not force itself to be written was valueless. In a letter to Taylor, written in February, 1818, he says:

"In poetry I have a few axioms, and you will see how far I am from their centre.

1st. I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.

2nd. Its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of Imagery should, like the Sun, come natural to him, shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight. But it is easier to think what poetry should be than to write it. And this leads me to

Another axiom — That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all."

That is what Keats really thought, in his own words. He may have said that on reading a passage over it sometimes struck him as being better than he remembered, he probably did say that he never forced himself to write when not in the mood, but the sentimental tone of awe attributed to him by Woodhouse is absolutely foreign to his habit of thought. And that he wrote his poems out almost as they were to stand and seldom corrected them, is simply

not so. Keats corrected and corrected. Not only at the moment of writing, but up to the last proof. All good poets correct, and Keats's corrections are a most important study for any one who is learning the art of poetry. He rarely blunders. Each new change is practically always an improvement. His early drafts are full of alterations done in the very heat of composition. I have several interesting examples of this in my own collection. For instance, I happen to own the first draft of the ode *To Autumn*; the copy of it made on the same day and sent in a letter to Woodhouse; and, of course, the first edition of the *Lamia* volume in which it appeared. There may have been other drafts, there is a transcript of a holograph manuscript in the British Museum, but these two holographs of mine, and the first edition, will serve us here.

Taking the first seven lines of the second stanza, here is the way Keats composed: He started, "Who hath not seen thee," with a question mark after it, and the line goes on, "for thy haunts are many." Then he scratched out the question mark and changed the end of the line to "oft amid thy stores," with the question mark at the end; then he drew a line through the "s" of "stores" and left "store." In the letter copy, written the same day, he reverts to "stores," but again cancels the "s" in the printed version which now reads "store." The second line in the first draft was first written, "Sometimes whoever seeks for thee may find," but "for thee "is deleted in favour of "abroad," and this correction is retained in the letter draft and in the first edition. The third and fourth lines are uncorrected, and read as in the printed version; but the fifth, sixth, and seventh gave him much trouble. For line five, he first wrote "While bright the sun slants through the barn," then, noticing that he is a foot short, he adds "bushy" before "barn," putting it above the line with a caret. But even so the line does not strike him as entirely satisfactory, and he cancels it at once for "or sound asleep in a half

reaped field," cancels that, and writes over it "or on a half reap'd furrow sound asleep," which he follows in the next line with "Dosed with red poppies; while thy reaping hook;" this he lets stand and goes on with the seventh line, which begins "Spares from some slumbrous," but evidently feels at once the hum of the "m" sounds, so writes half way under the line, "minutes while warm slumbers creep." But, by this time, the manuscript is in an awful mess, so he criss-crosses out the three confused lines and begins to transcribe them clearly. Taking the line he has decided on, he writes it out fairly "or on a half reap'd furrow sound asleep," but already he has thought of a change for the sixth line, and he now writes it "Das'd with the fume of poppies while thy hook," and then the difficult seventh line begins to bother him again. He tries his first attempt, with one word altered, for the beginning, and adds a different end, making the line read "Spares for some slumbrous minutes the next swath," but again seeing that the hum continues in spite of the change of "from" to "for," draws his pen through the whole line and writes above "Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers." In the letter draft, these three lines remain as finally left in the first draft, but in the first edition the word "Das'd" has given place to "Drows'd."

The last line of the poem shows how he touched and retouched his things. In the first draft, he begins "And new flock still," scratches it out, and puts underneath the full line "And gathering swallows twitter in the skies." In the letter draft, he changes to "gathered swallows," but reverts to his first reading of "gathering" in the first edition.

These are not the only changes in these three versions of the ode *To Autumn*, but they are enough to show how Keats worked. What is true of this poem is true of all his manuscripts which I have seen. The first draft of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, in my collection, is so altered and rewritten as to be

almost unreadable. To follow variations from a text in notes at the bottom of a page, gives us the gist of what the poet was trying to do, but gives no clue as to how his mind really worked. To see the manuscripts is almost like getting inside his brain. I mean, of course, manuscripts which are first drafts, where the poet was not copying, but composing as he went along.

These, naturally, are verbal criticisms; criticisms of subject matter rarely appear in a manuscript. But Keats was no mere intuitive poet. He reflected constantly on his art, and the remarks about poetry scattered through his writings prove him to have possessed — beside, and quite apart from, his genius — a very acute and subtle mind. "The excellence of every art is its intensity" is one of his dictums, and it is absolutely true. Again, he speaks of "that trembling delicate and snail-horn perception of beauty," and if ever man had it, it was he. Once when George Keats had been making some comparison between him and Lord Byron, he answers in a letter: "You speak of Lord Byron and me. There is this great difference between us: he describes what he sees — I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task." Writing to Reynolds in February, 1818, he points with a deft finger to the abiding fault of didactic poetry, where statement is permitted to oust suggestion, and maps the large gusto of the Elizabethans with an accurate eye, and all this in a passage of such nicely mingled common, and uncommon, sense that it is difficult to decide which predominates:

> "It may be said that we ought to read our contemporaries, that Wordsworth &c. should have their due from us. But, for the sake of a few imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist? Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself . . . We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us,

> and, if we do not agree, seems to put its hand into its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle or amaze with itself, but with its subject . . . Modern poets differ from the Elizabethans in this: each of the moderns like an Elector of Hanover governs his petty state, and knows how many straws are swept daily from the Causeways in all his dominions, and has a continual itching that all the Housewives should have their coppers well scoured. The ancients were Emperors of vast Provinces, they had only heard of the remote ones and scarcely cared to visit them."

It was not only in religion, but in poetry as well, that Keats was content to leave ultimate purpose unsolved. Witness this interesting bow-shot at a truth sent to his brothers at Teignmouth:

> ". . . it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously — I mean *Negative Capability*, that is, where a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration."

Poetry was Keats's chief interest, but not his only interest, he brought his faculty of analysis to bear on anything he happened to be reading. There are keen criticisms of prose to be found in his letters, of which this is an example:

> "You ask me what degrees there are between Scott's novels and those of Smollet. They appear to me to be quite distinct in every particular, more especially in their aim. Scott endeavours to throw so interesting and ro-

> mantic a colouring into common and low characters as to give them a touch of the sublime. Smollet, on the contrary, pulls down and levels what with other men would continue romance. The grand parts of Scott are within the reach of more minds than the finest humours of 'Humphrey Clinker.' I forget whether that fine thing of the Sargeant is Fielding's or Smollet's,[1] but it gives me more pleasure than the whole novel of 'The Antiquary.'"

It is with great difficulty that I resist the temptation to multiply quotations such as these, but a book cannot be stretched indefinitely, and I have given enough to show with what diligent insight Keats's mind occupied itself with the art of writing. I have dealt here with poetry and prose, in the next chapter we shall see how Keats observed and considered plays.

Keats did a great deal of reading at Oxford, among other things he found on Bailey's shelves was the folio volume of the poems of Mrs. Katherine Philips, the seventeenth century lady better known as "the matchless Orinda." He was so struck by the verses this lady wrote to her friend "Mrs. M. A." or "Rossannia" (really Mary Awbrey) that he copied them in full to Reynolds in illustration of what poetry by a woman should be. This was after airing his views on "a set of devils," who are "a set of women, who having taken a snack or luncheon of Literary scraps, set themselves up for a tower of Babel in languages, Sapphos in poetry, Euclids in Geometry, and everything in nothing." So, to the banging of kettle-drums, he buries his early love for Mrs. Tighe. There was one woman of whom he had never heard, and whom it is doubtful whether he had the qualities to appreciate if he had, a woman who painted women as only Shakespeare has painted them. Keats was writing on September twenty-first, nine weeks before, on July eighteenth, Jane Austen had died at Winchester. But if Keats had never heard of

[1] Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

Miss Austen, Miss Austen had never heard of Keats. The slim little *Poems* does not seem to have reached Chawton, where she lived; nor Godmersham Park, where she visited; nor Winchester, where she died; and probably she would not have liked it at all had it drifted her way, for her favourite poet was Crabbe.

We have seen how Keats wrote of Oxford to the Reynolds girls and his sister Fanny. To John Reynolds, he bursts into a characteristic bit of fooling in rhyme. In an undated fragment of a letter, which Buxton Forman puts after the one I have just quoted, written on Sunday, September twenty-first, but which I think belongs to the beginning of his stay with Bailey, is this remark: "Wordsworth sometimes, though in a very fine way, gives us sentences in the style of school exercizes." Here Keats misquotes a couple of lines from Wordsworth's poem beginning "The cock is crowing," and continues: "Now, I think this is an excellent method of giving a very clear description of an interesting place such as Oxford is.

> The Gothic looks solemn
> The plain Doric column
> Supports an old Bishop and Crosier;
> The mouldering arch,
> Shaded o'er by a larch
> Lives next door to Wilson the Hosier."

There are three stanzas, and there may have been more, for the fragment ends after the third stanza. If Keats meant to do his poem "in a fine way," he certainly did not succeed. The rhyme to "crosier" wrecked him, he could think of nothing but "hosier," and, with the advent of the excellent Wilson, the poem's doom is sealed. Thereafter it never even peeps back at its departed "fine way"; it is joking pure and simple.

I cannot leave these first weeks at Oxford without giving one more excerpt from the letter of September fourteenth

to Jane Reynolds. It will be remembered that it is in this very letter that Keats speaks of the sea, and I have already shown how the gradually diminishing effect of Oxford brought him back to his preoccupation with the sea, and to his own natural poetic speech. It almost looks as though Keats were conscious of this, and also partly aware that his mental home-coming is, in a way, a receding from Bailey. This receding he may have felt, half-consciously, to be a disloyalty, but he knows that, however his creative faculty may revolt from even the least intended influence, he himself is absolutely loyal to his friend. How loyal, we see from this passage:

> "To your brother John (whom henceforth I shall consider as mine) and to you, my dear friends, Marianne and Jane, I shall ever feel grateful for having made known to me so real a fellow as Bailey. He delights me in the selfish and (please God) in the disinterested part of my disposition. If the old Poets have any pleasure in looking down at the enjoyers of their works, their eyes must bend with a double satisfaction upon him. I sit as at a feast when he is over them, and pray that if, after my death, any of my labours should be worth saving, they may have so 'honest a chronicler' as Bailey. Out of this, his enthusiasm in his own pursuit and for all good things is of an exalted kind — worthy a more healthful frame and an untorn spirit."

Keats possessed to a very great degree the power of generous enthusiasm. He was no niggard of love. Where he gave affection and admiration, he gave with an unstinting hand. He was a man of friendships, because friendship to him was so tough and full-hearted a thing. Yet it is a melancholy fact that, warm and kindly as many of his friends were, in no single instance did he get back as good as he gave. The only exception is in the case of a man whom Keats certainly never rated as one of his inner circle. I mean Richard Woodhouse, for Woodhouse gave

all that the relations between the two men permitted, and more than Keats ever knew. For the reasons that they never came closer together, we must look to those baffling laws which rule the circumstances of personal attractions.

By the time the Third Book was done, on that Friday when he wrote at the end of his finished manuscript, "Oxf. Sept. 26," Keats was dog tired. He needed what he always needed after a long bout of writing — a change. Constant change of scene was the miraculous draught of Keats's life. Change startled him into the creative mood, and braced up his flaccid nerves when he had been working too long. At this point, somebody had an inspiration, and I imagine it was Bailey. Why should they not both go on a little jaunt to Stratford-on-Avon, and see Shakespeare's house, and revel in the kind of dreams which Keats knew so well how to evoke? It was a simple journey from Oxford, a comfortable coach ride of just under forty miles, the only difficulty being that, as Stratford was on the way to various other places, the London coaches which they must have taken to reach it all passed through Oxford at night. A night to go, two days and a night at Stratford, a night to return — that was probably the itinerary followed by Keats and Bailey. We know that they were in Stratford on Thursday, October second, for their signatures appear under that date in the visitors' book of Holy Trinity Church.[1]

Keats, much as he must have been moved by Stratford — as he always was by places of literary association, and Stratford was certainly the cream of such to him — was in no mood for writing poetry, and under no necessity to write letters since he was going home so soon. Therefore it is to Bailey's account that we must look for Keats's impressions of the trip. They are exactly what one would suppose:

[1] Colvin.

[1] "We went of course to the house visited by so many thousands of all nations of Europe, and inscribed our names in addition to the 'numbers numberless' of those which literally blackened the walls. We also visited the Church, and were pestered by a commonplace showman of the place . . . He was struck, I remember, with the simple statue there, which, though rudely executed, we agreed was most probably the best likeness of the many extant, but none very authentic, of Shakespeare.

His enjoyment was of that genuine, quiet kind which was a part of his gentle nature; deeply feeling what he truly enjoyed, but saying little."

We may regard this, as far as it goes, as fact. Although Bailey gets his date wrong — recollecting the visit as having taken place before Keats finished his Third Book, which we see by the signatures and date in the visitors' book of Holy Trinity was not so. I think it very likely, however, that Bailey is right in saying that Keats returned with him to Oxford. Keats may well have thought that the long pull of ninety-three miles back to town would be better broken by a quiet night or two at Bailey's. They probably came back from Stratford on Friday night, for on Sunday, at the latest, Keats went up to town, going "from coach to Coach as far as Hampstead," he tells Bailey in his bread-and-butter letter written on the Wednesday following. At Hampstead, he found his brothers, returned from Paris; and so the Summer outings ended and the three boys settled down to life as they supposed it was going to be.

The first thing that John did the very next day after his arrival was to rush off and see everybody. First came the Reynoldses, then Haydon and even Hunt, the last two now living near each other in Lisson Grove. At Hunt's, he found Shelley, and in all three places he heard news of his set and gossip of not too agreeable a character. The next

[1] Bailey Memoranda. Colvin.

morning he went to Brown's and Reynolds came in, Reynolds "was pretty bobbish, we had a pleasant day." The very night that he is writing, the brothers are to dine at Brown's where Reynolds is also expected.

This is Keats to the life, just what we should expect. Violent reaction engendering a mood of lively sociability. He wants to see everybody, and see them all in a hurry, and hear about everything, and what he heard was none too grateful. There were a lot of sprightly little quarrels going on. Haydon's picture was at a dead stop, and Hunt was continually going to see him and criticizing it adversely; Horace Smith had become bored with Hunt. Haydon told Keats not to show Hunt his poem "on any Account" or Hunt would surely say that he had done half of it. Reynolds told him that, on his informing Hunt that Keats had completed nearly four thousand lines, Hunt had said that were it not for him they would have been seven thousand. These small grievances were warmed over and served piping hot to Keats in the pleasant way of friends. It was all pretty discouraging, and Keats retails it all to Bailey. The Bentley children and their noise bothered him, and he was not feeling very well. So the letter goes, but it is noticeable that Brown does not figure among the tale-tellers, which was another step forward for Brown's system.

A certain sentence at the end of the letter to Bailey has been seized upon by various biographers and pamphleteers and made to carry a sinister meaning. The sentence in question is this:

> "The little Mercury I have taken has corrected the poison and improved my health — tho' I feel from my employment that I shall never be again secure in Robustness."

W. M. Rossetti was, I believe, the first to read into this sentence the suggestion that Keats had contracted syphilis

at Oxford. He based his theory, of course, on the fact that, in those days, mercury was generally employed in the treatment of that disease. But it is equally true that mercury was used in many other diseases, as, for instance, rheumatism, croup, cholera morbus, dysentery, and pulmonary tuberculosis. Keats was confined to the house for two weeks with some disorder very shortly after he got back to Hampstead, but this may have been due to any one of a number of ailments. For we must remember that he had been under a continuous creative strain for five months and was tired out and run down. His illness evidently attracted attention, for, writing to Bailey from Burford Bridge in November, he says:

> "The world is full of troubles, and I have not much reason to think myself pestered with many.
>
> I think Jane or Marianne has a better opinion of me than I deserve; for, really and truly, I do not think my Brother's illness connected with mine — you know more of the real Cause than they do; nor have I any chance of being rack'd as you have been."

This passage must be read carefully to dig out its meaning. Evidently Jane or Marianne Reynolds was afraid that Keats's recent ill-health pointed to consumption, and considered that he was taking it bravely. Bailey's being racked refers to the non-success of one of his love affairs. Keats thinks himself safe from ever being in Bailey's position, and he does not believe himself touched by tuberculosis. What it all seems to point to is that Keats feared he might have contracted syphilis, but felt that the mercury had cured him since certain symptoms his medical training had taught him to expect did not appear. It is, however, possible that the disease may have struck in and increased his hereditary tendency to tuberculosis. All this may have been true, but it should never be forgotten that none of it is needed. Keats not only inherited a very

strong tendency to tuberculosis, he was living intimately with a man who had it, his brother Tom. The sanitary precautions against catching tuberculosis, with which all the world is now familiar, were unknown in his day. The brothers eat together and lived in poorly ventilated rooms. A run-down condition would greatly increase the danger of infection, and Keats, on his return from Oxford, was clearly run-down and in no state to resist any infection to which he might be exposed. The tuberculous throat, which made its appearance definitely in the following Summer, was, without doubt, an effect of long germination in the lungs. How strong the tendency to tuberculosis was in the Keats family is shown by the fact that, in the four generations which we know of, it regularly appeared. Keats's mother died of it, as did two of her sons; of George Keats's children, two became its victims, and two grandchildren also developed it. The fifth generation seems to have outgrown the tendency, also the improved methods of treatment to-day have made curable what was once hopeless. I have not, naturally, written all this without taking medical advice on the subject, and carefully examining the facts of Keats's health as we know them with this advice in mind.

Dr. John B. Hawes, 2nd,[1] for whom I compiled a health history of Keats taken from his letters and those of his friends, writes as follows:

> "I have been over Miss Lowell's manuscript giving the history of Keats's life and death and I can say that in checking it up, it is not inconsistent with pulmonary tuberculosis and laryngeal tuberculosis. Although not typical of the latter, I have seen not a few cases of laryngeal tuberculosis that have acted in just the way this one

[1] Chief of the Pulmonary Clinic. Massachusetts General Hospital. Chief of the Non-Surgical Tuberculosis Clinic. Massachusetts General Hospital. Consultant in Pulmonary Cases for the Veterans' Bureau of Massachusetts. Formerly Secretary of the Tuberculosis Hospital Board of Massachusetts.

has done. There have been periods when the throat condition has been very severe with hoarseness, and pain, and then for some unknown reason there would be equal periods when practically all symptoms would disappear except a slight hoarseness.

While syphilis, therefore, may have been a factor in this case, I do not feel that such would necessarily be the case, but I do feel that tuberculosis would explain everything."

As to the testimony of the mercury, a letter from Dr. Abner Post,[1] who also examined the "health history" with great care, proves it most unstable evidence. Dr. Post says:

"There was a long period during which mercury, in a number of forms, was used in medicine very freely and, as it seems today, almost recklessly. Syphilis was only one of the many diseases for which it was used, and it is impossible to know what the disease was, simply because mercury in some form was used in its treatment. The first third of the nineteenth century was included in this period of mercurial infatuation."

Dr. Post goes on to cite a number of authorities in regard to the diseases in which mercury was commonly employed, and to these appends a list of such diseases, which runs to the considerable figure of nineteen. It is from this list that I compiled the much abbreviated catalogue already given.

In view of the opinion of these eminent specialists, my conclusion is that although it is possible that Keats did contract syphilis, there is no proof whatever that he did, since his symptoms, so far as we can tell, are perfectly attributable to tuberculosis alone. Probably, had Keats lived to-day, consumption in his case could have been prevented. He seems to have had a strong constitution apart from his one weakness, although we must not forget that the exactions of an emotional temperament such as his were a handicap. Living when he did, he was in constant

[1] Professor Emeritus of Syphilis. Harvard Medical School.

peril from the moment that he began to over-exert himself, and his close association with the dying Tom left him no loop-hole of escape. The beginning of his illness is usually dated from his return from Scotland in August, 1819. I think that is an error; and, in the light of modern medical research, I am strongly inclined to believe that we must date it, the faint indications of it, from the Autumn of 1817. He was, we remember, very tired and nervous in March, before he went to the Isle of Wight, and since then six months had passed, a period during which he had worked with indefatigable zeal, and suffered to the full the alternations of excitement and depression. The two weeks of illness at Hampstead we must take as a sort of break-down, and a break-down undergone in the close proximity of a tuberculous brother. If we realize this, we shall marvel at the constitution and will which kept him going so long, and not wonder, as some of his earlier biographers have done, that he went so quickly at the end.

The most teasing of the petty annoyances which buzzed round Keats's ears on his return to town was the suggestion that he was indebted to Hunt in the writing of *Endymion*. Since Hunt had not seen a line of the poem, this implication was peculiarly galling. Keats's indignation bursts out in his first letter to Bailey. After quoting a long passage from a letter written to his brother George "in the Spring," part of which I have already given,[1] he goes on:

> "You see Bailey how independent my Writing has been. Hunt's dissuasion was of no avail — I refused to visit Shelley that I might have my own unfettered scope; — and after all, I shall have the Reputation of Hunt's élève. His corrections and amputations will by the knowing ones be traced in the Poem. This is, to be sure, the vexation of a day — nor would I say so many words about it to any but those whom I know to have my welfare and reputation at heart."

[1] See Vol. I, p. 306.

It was not long after this that Keats succumbed to overwork, worry, and, I very much fear, a sore throat. For, toward the end of the month, he writes to Bailey again, telling him that he has been shut up at Hampstead for two weeks, but is now out and about again. A week or more later, he says he has not "been well enough to stand the chance of a wet night," and so has not seen Haydon. Reynolds, he has seen, and doubtless Haslam, Severn, Dilke, and Brown kept his enforced house-keeping from being too dull. But the worries were not fanciful ones. Tom was really ill, and it was becoming evident that a Winter in London would be a dangerous thing for him to face. There was some talk of his going to Lisbon with John, but eventually it was decided that he should try Devonshire instead, and that George, not John, should be his companion.

A very much less important worry, but one which, nevertheless, deserves the name from the trouble it caused Keats, was the case of a young man named Cripps. Haydon had observed this young man at Oxford copying some pictures, and had asked Keats while there to hunt him up and communicate to him an offer from Haydon to take him as a pupil. Keats did so, but it soon appeared that Haydon required the usual apprenticeship fee. Keats, out of sheer kindness of heart, undertook to raise a subscription to meet it, and for some months his letters are full of Cripps, and Haydon's failure to keep his engagements in regard to him. Perhaps Cripps proved himself less talented than Haydon had at first thought, certainly his name has not come ringing down to us. The affair is only of moment as showing Keats's generous willingness to spend himself for other people, and Haydon's unreliability.

A third worry, of a much greater magnitude than the Cripps business, was the appearance in the October number of *Blackwood's Magazine* (the number which inaugurated the ruthless sway of Messrs. Wilson and

Lockhart) of the first of the series of articles on the *Cockney School.* This first article was an attack upon Hunt of the most abominable kind. Keats calls it "a flaming attack," and says of it:

> "I never read anything so virulent — accusing him of the greatest Crimes, depreciating his Wife, his Poetry, his Habits, his Company, his Conversation. These philippics are to come out in numbers called 'The Cockney School of Poetry.' There has been but one number published . . . to which they have prefixed a motto from one Cornelius Webb, Poetaster — who unfortunately was of our party occasionally at Hampstead, and took it into his head to write the following — something about, 'We'll talk on Wordsworth, Byron, a theme we never tire on;' and so forth till he comes to Hunt and Keats. In the motto they have put Hunt and Keats in large letters."

The motto to this outrageous sheaf of abuse reads in this wise:

> 'Our Talk shall be (a theme we never tire on)
> Of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Byron,
> (Our England's Dante) — Wordsworth — HUNT, and
> KEATS,
> The Muses' Son of promise; and what feats
> He yet may do."
>
> CORNELIUS WEBB.

This naturally led Keats to fear that the next paper would be devoted to him, yet, not knowing the men with whom he had to deal, he seems to have believed that an advertisement in the *Examiner* for November Second, in which Hunt had challenged the writer of the anonymous article (it was signed simply "Z") to send his address to the printer "in order that Justice may be Executed on the proper person" would have the effect of putting a stop to the series. That it had quite the opposite effect, we shall very soon see. Keats could not help dreading the arrival of his turn, but, with admirable courage, he says:

> "I don't mind the thing much — but if he should go to such lengths with me as he has done with Hunt, I must infallibly call him to an Account if he be a human being, and appears in Squares and Theatres, where we might 'possibly meet' — I don't relish his abuse."

What else Keats may have said on the subject, we do not know, for these quotations are from a fragment of a letter to Bailey, postmarked November fifth, 1817, and the fragment ends with the above. Such a threat as that hinted in the *Examiner*, and practically uttered by Keats, was no mere rhodomontade in those days. Duelling, although against the law, was still not seldom resorted to as a means of wiping out an insult. In the sequel, these very *Blackwood* articles led to a duel in which poor John Scott was killed, but that was not until three years later. At the moment, nothing happened; for "Z" was not man enough to acknowledge his identity. It seems wiser to defer discussion of these *Cockney School* articles until a later chapter. It is enough to say, at this moment, that all mystery about them was dissipated years ago, and I shall give the whole history of them when, in the course of the narrative, we reach the time at which the one dealing with Keats was published.

We have now arrived at a point a few days later than the date on which Keats wrote the letter to Jane Reynolds, containing the *Ode to Sorrow*, transcribed in the last chapter. We have seen that Keats, after his long and unbroken concentration on *Endymion* was becoming impatient to try his hand at lyrics once more.[1] He wrote two, and managed to incorporate them in *Endymion*, but, shortly after, he was moved to write another, which no power could make a part of his great poem. It was, and is, a perfectly separate little piece, the only one we know of his permitting himself to write, with the exception of the Oxford parody, since beginning *Endymion*. The poem, which was first printed by

[1] See Vol. I, p. 440.

Lord Houghton, is entitled simply *To* ——. It is, naturally, far better known by its first two lines, which are:

"Think not of it, sweet one, so; —
Give it not a tear."

The date is given in the first Woodhouse Commonplace Book in this way: "Abt. 11 Novr. 1817. from K's ms," so there is room for a doubt as to the exact day. November eleventh was a Tuesday, which tells us nothing, of course. Another inconsiderable lyric of the same general character is given by Lord Houghton immediately after *Think not of it.* This second poem is called simply *Lines*, but is generally known, as in the previous case, by its first two:

"Unfelt, unheard, unseen,
I've left my little queen."

There is no merit in either of these poems. They read like exercises of lyric form rather than anything else. But, also, they seem an attempt to catch a gossamer beauty, a sort of beauty quite foreign to the type with which Keats had been busy for months. Needless to say, they fail, drooping weakly to the ground not undraggled by the sticky sweetness of Keats's early work. The last things they seem are records of any real occurrence. I am forced to the conclusion that they are simply and solely experiments on Keats's part to see if he had lost his versatility, and a sort of mental outlet to his brain, overworked with one point of view and, with the exception of the *Indian Maiden's Song*, one metre. There is also another possibility, and an extremely likely one, namely, that these two little songs represent new words to Charlotte Reynolds's music, for they are quite in keeping with the sentimental ditties of the period.

As November advanced, the Keats brothers' plans took shape. George and Tom were to go to Teignmouth in Devonshire, starting about the middle of December.

John was to stay in Hampstead, finish *Endymion* and get it ready for the press, and, when that was over, go down to Teignmouth and join his brothers. A pleasant arrangement, but *Endymion* would not allow itself to be finished. There were too many distractions, too many people to see, too many reasons for running hither and thither. The more Keats wanted to end the poem, the more he could not do so. The long and the short of it was that he could not stand things as they were in town; he must try his infallible remedy — change of scene. So off he went to Burford Bridge, to the little inn lying at the foot of Box Hill.

There is no more enchanting place in the home counties than Box Hill, and, if we can imagine ourselves back a hundred years, when trippers were unknown, and Dorking and Leatherhead country villages, with Box Hill itself a sylvan retreat, not a trodden highway — if we can imagine the thin sunshine of late November lightly spreading footpaths and lanes with a shadow-pattern of bare boughs and slender twigs on which sometimes a last dried leaf still clings and flutters, ditches choked with the debris of a season's blooming turned rustling highways to the skim of a passing wind, glimpses of hazy landscape with the little river Mole a blue streak dimming and brightening to the march of blowing clouds, and, from the top of the hill, the Autumn view of smoke-coloured woodlands fringing shorn meadows — we shall know it lovelier still, even on the days when mist hangs heavily about the heads of old oaks and the holly bushes glisten in the rain. Keats could not have chosen a more sympathetic, a more peaceful, or a more cheerful spot. Had he known or cared as much for recent history as he did for a remoter past, his delight in the place itself would have been augmented by the charm of reminiscence. Close to the hill stood Juniper Hall, the home of Madame de Staël, Talleyrand, Narbonne, and other *émigrés* for a time during the French Revolution. Norbury

Park, mentioned so often in Fanny Burney's Diary, was close by, and not far off was Camilla Cottage, which Madame d'Arblay had built with the proceeds of her novel of that name. A memory more likely to affect him lay in the fact that at the very inn where he was staying Nelson had spent a night on his way to Portsmouth to join the *Victory* just before Trafalgar. But, if Keats knew these things, he was not in the humour for them to count. At the moment, he was occupied with the moon and his poem, and the hill chiefly in so far as it brought the moon and his poem into fresh conjunction and gave his imagination a new fillip.

The actual day on which Keats went to Burford Bridge cannot be determined, but it was probably on either Thursday or Friday, November twentieth or twenty-first. He was certainly there on Saturday, the twenty-second, for on Friday or Saturday, he wrote to Bailey.[1] The world was still very much with him in this letter. There is not a word about the countryside, and only the fact that he has gone there to spur on *Endymion* as a reference to his poem. The letter begins with the Cripps worry. Haydon has written a disagreeable letter to Bailey on the subject, which gives Keats an opportunity to express what, from our point of view, is a most interesting opinion. This is what he says:

> [2] "What occasions the greater part of the world's quarrels? Simply this — two Minds meet, and do not understand each other time enough to prevent any shock or surprise at the conduct of either party. As soon as I had known Haydon three days, I had got enough of his Character not to have been surprised at such a Letter as he has hurt you with. Nor, when I knew it, was it a principle with me to drop his acquaintance; although with

[1] For dates of the letters from Burford Bridge to Bailey and Reynolds, see Vol. I, pp. 446–447.

[2] Quotations from this letter are corrected from the holograph. Author's Collection.

you it would have been an imperious feeling. I wish you knew all that I think about Genius and Heart — and yet I think that you are thoroughly acquainted with my innermost breast in that respect, or you could not have known me even thus long, and still hold me worthy to be your dear Friend. In passing, however, I must say one thing that has pressed upon me lately, and increased my Humility and capability of submission — and that is this truth — Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect — but they have not any individuality, any determined Character — I would call the top and head of those who have a proper self, Men of Power.

But I am running my head into a subject which I am certain I could not do justice to under five Years' study, and 3 vols. octavo — and, moreover, long to be talking about the Imagination."

This theory of the impersonality of genius is a favourite speculation with Keats. He explains it more at length in a letter to Woodhouse written two years later. It does, indeed, throw considerable light on a condition of Keats's writing life — the power of reducing his own strong personality to a mere receiving medium, a sensitized plate on which impressions might record themselves untinged by his own ego. Keats's remarks here are not so much a truth as a haphazard shot at a bright speck which he feels may turn out to be a truth. He is a little troubled and perplexed at his shifting moods. Bailey does not shift, he is not two or three men within the hour as Keats is forced to realize that he himself is. Not seeing quite far enough into his own psychological processes, he is not a little shocked at this variability of attitude. Bailey being for the moment his ideal of purposeful endeavour, he wants to find himself more oriented in this respect, and is puzzled and annoyed to discover that he is, as he supposes, the very opposite. The answer is, of course, that Keats confused the necessarily diverse methods of endeavour of the artist and the

mere man of brains, be he scholar, banker, what you will. Fumbling round amid the half-truths which his new experiences had scattered about his mind, he missed the reconciling fact of the total difference of the workings of the conscious and subconscious minds. The elementary facts of psychology had not become nursery proverbs to his generation as they have to ours. He knew himself for a man of brains, of far better brains than Bailey could boast, although that, of course, he would have denied. He also knew that he had the power to write poetry, but that the poetry turned him whither it would, and brushed his brains aside whenever it pleased; or rather, that his brains played him false and went rioting over to the side of poetry whenever poetry had a mind to call on them for assistance. This knowledge gave him a sense of bewilderment. Clearly, he was not the master of himself, and if he were not master, what was? He might rule for a day or two, but, whenever it liked, the poetry would come in and order him round like a slave. And the worst of it was that he was never so happy as when he was obeying. He wanted to be a sensitive recipient to his imagination, which to him represented the highest and most spiritual truth of which he was cognizant; but he also wanted, paradoxically, to guide this same imagination, and that he could by no means do. He felt this as a constant war when he felt it at all, which was, on the whole, far too often.

At the end of the letter, he returns again to his charge, fearful lest Bailey should be hurt at his seeming changes of heart. In this passage, he reveals what he seldom, in these early days, permitted anyone to see, the fundamental disbelief in happiness which dogged him all his life. But here it is only a shadow, a faint shadow, swiftly passing:

> "I scarcely remember counting upon any happiness — I look not for it if it be not in the present hour, — nothing startles me beyond the moment. The Setting Sun will always set me to rights, or if a Sparrow come before my

> Window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel. The first thing that strikes me on hearing a misfortune having befallen another is this — 'Well, it cannot be helped: he will have the pleasure of trying the resources of his Spirit' — and I beg now, my dear Bailey, that hereafter should you observe anything cold in me not to put it to the account of heartlessness, but abstraction — for I assure you I sometimes feel not the influence of a passion or affection during a whole Week — and so long this sometimes continues, I begin to suspect myself, and the genuineness of my feelings at other times — thinking them a few barren Tragedy Tears."

The only comfort for an artist is to know himself for what he is, the possessor of an extremely exacting and disconcerting type of mind. Keats, not yet comprehending himself, is too harsh in his conclusions. Being a sentient, yet highly ethical, man, his quarrel with himself was unending. Since he could not analyze himself in the light of any guiding clue, we find him going at this same subject from different angles, again and again. His endeavours to probe himself are curiously persistent and pathetic, for sincerity was a dominating trait with him.

This letter contains the passage beginning "I am certain of nothing but the Holiness of the Heart's affections," which I quoted in the last chapter.[1] In connection with this, he refers to "the little Song I sent in my last," which, he says, is "a representation from the fancy" of what he has been saying. But no such song do we know. It was probably sent in the letter of November fifth, which has come down to us as a fragment merely, or in another letter that is lost. Certainly the description of it does not fit either of the love songs we have already considered.

Following immediately upon this passage, Keats returns to his and Bailey's long discussions on Milton by a reference to Adam's dream in the Eighth Book of *Paradise Lost*. He uses it to dot his argument:

[1] See Vol. I, p. 360.

> [1] "The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream, — he awoke and found it truth: — I am more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning — and yet it must be. Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his Goal without putting aside numerous objections? However it may be, O for a life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts! It is 'a Vision in the form of Youth,' a shadow of reality to come — and this consideration has further convinced me, — for it has come as auxiliary to another favourite speculation of mine, — that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we call happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated. And yet such a fate can only befall those who delight in Sensation, rather than hunger as you do after Truth. Adam's dream will do here, and seems to be a Conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection, is the same as human life and its spiritual repetition. But, as I was saying, the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine Suddenness."

That is Keats, Keats as he saw himself to be in his moments of entranced rapture. Sensation was not to him a mere material thing, but the rift in the cloud through which he glimpsed the heavenly hosts. Yet, even as he describes his vision, even as he pulses with the power to evoke from sensation the dream of eternal loveliness and meaning, he is teased by the thought that the most completely developed type of man arrives at truth by another road:

> "Sure this cannot be exactly the case with a complex mind — one that is imaginative, and at the same time careful of its fruits, — who would exist partly on Sensation, partly on thought — to whom it is necessary that 'years should bring the philosophic Mind'?[2] Such a one I consider yours."

Keats was shrewd enough to see a good way through

[1] Corrected from the original. Author's Collection.
[2] Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality*.

Haydon, but he was greatly mistaken in Bailey. However, no matter for that just now. With his mind filled with these whys and wherefores, what room was there for *Endymion*, how could five hundred lines squeeze themselves in between so many fermenting ideas, doubts, and wonders? But Keats had an everlasting friend who never failed him, to whom the tide of his feelings always turned, the uniting symbol which welded his two combating halves into a quiet compromise and made him whole — Diana, the glorious, silent, distant, and comprehending moon. On Saturday night he went up to Box Hill, and saw and found his moon, and coming down "wrote some lines." Sensation conquered, he was stilled, succoured, turned once more upon his task; the last five hundred lines were begun.

Yet, even so, Keats, come down from the hill to his little room in the inn, cannot quite forget the world. His "some lines" written, his mind goes back to London and the life he has left behind. But this time he goes back in a somewhat altered frame of mind. It is Reynolds he writes to now, and Reynolds is a very different man from Bailey. The letter begins:

> "There are two things which teaze me here — one of them Cripps, and the other that I cannot go with Tom into Devonshire. However, I hope to do my duty to myself in a week or so; and then I'll try what I can do for my neighbour — now, is not this virtuous? On returning to Town I'll damn all Idleness — indeed, in superabundance of employment, I must not be content to run here and there on little two-penny errands."

It is just the "little two-penny errands" which have been sapping his vitality. Indeed, from his very mention of them, we can see that their ghosts haunt him still. But, after all, Tom seems better, he has just told Bailey so, and he is at liberty to plunge head over ears into poetry, if he can. He has only this minute taken a first dip, and the

vigour he has gained from it tinges the very diction of his letter. He tells Reynolds that one of the three books he has brought with him is Shakespeare's *Poems*, and forthwith proceeds to quote passages and comment on them. One of these quotations is

> ". . . a poet's rage
> And stretched metre of an antique song." [1]

Having written that down, he is struck with its appositeness of description to his *Endymion* and exclaims promptly: "Which by the bye, will be a capital motto for my poem, won't it?" He treasured it up, and the last line was printed on the title-page of *Endymion*.

We have already noticed [2] that the "some lines" were, by ordinary counting, at least ninety-four. We can therefore see that his walk up Box Hill had put him into splendid cue. Indeed, the moment, whether through accident or design, was fortuitous, for the moon lacked but twenty-four hours of being at the full; and the weather was kind, providing one of those tumbled skies of jet and silver cloud-racks through which the moon breaks and beams from time to time. I believe, that night, he stopped in the middle of the song, just where he breaks off in the letter to Reynolds. Considering that the moon had set him going, it would be thoroughly in keeping for him to find that he had done enough for one bout at the lines:

> "The Star-Queen's Crescent on her marriage night:
> Haste, haste away!"

But he is all keyed up, we can feel his excitement in the manner in which he ushers in his quotation:

> "By the Whim-King! I'll give you a stanza, because it is not material in connexion, and when I wrote it I wanted you — to give your vote, pro or con. —"

[1] Shakespeare. Sonnet XVII. [2] See Vol. I, p. 446.

This stanza (as he calls it) begins with the line:

"Crystalline brother of the belt of Heaven,"

and ends with those quoted above. A sort of quasi-evidence in favour of his having paused for the night at this point, is the fact that he follows his quotation with the sentence: "Now I hope I shall not fall off in the winding up."

Ninety-four lines is not a vast amount to do at a sitting. The ordinary double-spaced typewritten page of to-day contains about thirty-two lines, so we see that he need only have written three pages to fill his quota — by no means a large allowance. His stint of fifty lines a day at Oxford was, indeed, extremely small. There was plenty of time for his walk up Box Hill, his three pages of composition, and his letter to Reynolds, all accomplished in the same evening, for, on that short November day, the sun set at a quarter past four.

Wherever Keats stopped, his mood of joyous excitement continued and craved the imaginative relief of a comprehending response, so he shifted from *Endymion* to Reynolds and worked himself out in that way.

It is particularly interesting to watch how well Keats knew when he had worn his creating edge even a trifle dull, when he risked doing inferior work if he went on. It is most important to observe that he dropped his work then and there, even though the mood continued, and this bears out exactly what Woodhouse says of him: "The moment he feels any dearth he discontinues writing and waits for a happier moment." [1]

Apparently, from that Saturday evening, the world ceased to haunt him. At any rate, we know of no more letters from Burford Bridge, and I cannot help thinking that, if he had written, it would have been to Reynolds, for, when it was a question of poetry, there is no doubt that he found Reynolds more sympathetic than any one

[1] See Vol. I, p. 501.

else. No, it is evident that during all the next week Keats was fairly captured by his poem. On Saturday night he had got as far as line 590. There are one thousand and three lines in the Fourth Book, making four hundred and thirteen still to be written, as well as we can calculate, at the time he wrote to Reynolds. It took him just six days to do them, and on the following Friday, November twenty-eighth, he wrote the last line and dated his manuscript with the sense of a load lifted off his mind.

*Endymion* was finished, except for revision that is, and Keats could not, naturally, begin revising at once. But he could go home, and he did not. He wanted an empty space between the strenuous week he had just passed through and the taking up of his ordinary life. If solitude had ground upon him in the Spring, it was balm and healing to him now. He had completed it, his great task; the labour, the holding himself to a line, the long vista of days and days working to one end, was over. He was another man from the young fellow who had dreaded to begin his poem. This man who ended it and dated his release from a self-imposed tyranny, a tyranny the result of which was to make or mar all his poetical prospects, was a totally different person from the youth who had summoned his brother to keep him away from himself. He did not want to be kept away from himself now. On the contrary, he wanted an infinity of leisure to see into himself and weigh and appraise. He was in a mood for stock-taking, and under the plain necessity of dulling the sharp edge of his susceptibility a little before encountering the hustlings and well-meant impingements which his personality was sure to receive in town. He stayed on at Burford Bridge, then, for a week or more, perhaps. But we cannot be certain of the date of his return to town, as there is no letter extant from him until December twenty-eighth.

We can picture him walking about the country, enjoying to the full the sense of freedom and achievement. Looking

at everything with that observant eye of his, and finding what he saw superlatively good and medicine to his soul. Did he realize that Shelley's father, Sir Timothy Shelley, lived at Field Place, some six miles beyond Dorking on the Brighton road? If he did, he probably gave its gates a wide berth. All that we actually know of these last days at Burford Bridge is that on one of them he wrote the little lyric, *In Drear-Nighted December.*

This poem has had rather a curious history, which it seems worth while to retail in full. In the first place, on Woodhouse's testimony, it was attributed to the year 1818; but the discovery of the second Woodhouse Commonplace Book (*Poems II*),[1] corrected what was all along an error on Woodhouse's part, for in that volume he carefully revises his former judgment by recording that Jane Reynolds had told him that it was written in December, 1817, while Keats was at Burford Bridge.

The poem was published in the *Gem*, a periodical edited by Thomas Hood, in 1829, and, in the same year, made one of the selections from Keats's work in the Galignani edition of the *Poems of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats.* These practically contemporaneous printings have hitherto been supposed to be the first. I am, however, indebted to a correspondent in the London *Times Literary Supplement*,[2] for a still farther correction. It seems that some two or three weeks before its appearance in the *Gem*, the poem, in a slightly different version, was printed in the *Literary Gazette* for September nineteenth, 1829. There it was put in the selection *Original Poetry*, entitled merely *Stanzas* (*Unpublished*) and signed at the end "John Keats." Later, in the number for October twenty-fourth, 1829, at the end of a review of the *Gem*, the *Gazette* reviewer remarked: "There is a poem of the late J. Keats, which

[1] Crewe Collection.

[2] Letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* by George Dumas Stout. September 14, 1922.

appeared a few weeks since in the 'Literary Gazette': it is but justice to state that the proprietors had previously printed their version from another copy." There is a little confusion here as to whether "the proprietors" were those of the *Literary Gazette* or the *Gem*. But that is really immaterial. The point is that the poem was printed in perfectly good faith by two editors from different manuscripts, derived from different people. Hood undoubtedly got his version from his wife, he had married Jane Reynolds; the *Literary Gazette* probably received theirs from either Taylor or Woodhouse, since they also had copies. It is not my purpose here to enter into variant readings. But some obvious changes had crept into the printed versions which I agree entirely with Sir Sidney Colvin should now be suppressed, since Keats's holograph manuscript, as well as the copies made by Woodhouse and Brown, are without them. For the pleasure of having the original version here, I copy the poem as Sir Sidney gives it in his *Life of Keats*; also, sundry things have turned up which make a re-reading of it necessary.

"In drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity:
The north cannot undo them,
With a sleety whistle through them;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting,
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

Ah! would t'were so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writh'd not at passed joy?
The feel of *not* to feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbed sense to steel it,
Was never said in rhyme."

In the *Literary Gazette*, the *Gem*, and the Galignani edition, and of course in all subsequent reprints, the first line reads "In a drear-nighted December," which is perhaps an improvement, but there is also a change from the holograph in the fifth line of the third stanza, which in the alteration reads: "To know the change and feel it." Sir Sidney has something so pertinent to say about this, that I shall quote his passage in part:

> "The new fifth line is to modern ears more elegant than the original, as getting rid of the vulgar substantive form 'feel' for feeling. But 'feel,' which after all had been good enough for Horace Walpole and Fanny Burney, was to Keats and the Leigh Hunt circle no vulgarism at all, it was a thing of every day usage both in verse and prose. And does not the correction somewhat blunt the point of Keats's meaning? To be poignantly aware of no longer feeling a joy once felt is a pain that may indeed call for steeling or healing, while to steel or heal a 'change' seems neither so easy nor so needful: at all events the phrase is more lax."

I am in entire accord with Sir Sidney in thinking that the alteration of the line seriously weakens its effect. But I fear Sir Sidney's suggestion that this alteration is due to the editing of, possibly, Hood, cannot stand, since the editor of the *Literary Gazette*, printing from a different manuscript, also has it. Sir Sidney goes on to state that a perfectly new version of the last stanza, copied in 1827 by one of Woodhouse's brothers, seems evidence that Keats did try variations of it. This stanza, quoted in his *Life of Keats*, is as follows:

"But in the Soul's December
The fancy backward strays,
And darkly doth remember
The hue of golden days,
In woe the thought appalling
Of bliss gone past recalling
Brings o'er the heart a falling
Not to be told in rhyme."

Of this stanza, Sir Sidney says: "This can hardly be other than an alternative version tried by Keats himself," and he goes on to show a precedent for "falling" in Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality*, but adds, "and though 'the thought appalling' is a commonplace phrase little in Keats's manner, it is worth noticing that the word occurs in Bailey's report of his spoken comment on this very passage of Wordsworth." True, but that was *Bailey's report* of a spoken comment; what Keats really said, we have no idea, but the expression here is none of Keats's. He did not write that stanza; Woodhouse did. And I say this on no less an authority than Woodhouse himself. The information is contained in an unpublished letter to Taylor,[1] written on the twenty-third of November, 1820. Woodhouse is perfectly explicit:

> "I have tried unsuccessfully to admire the 3d Stanza of 'Drear-nighted Dec.' as much as the 2 first — I plead guilty, even before I am accused, of an utter abhorrence of the word 'feel' for feeling (substantively). But Keats seems fond of it and will engraft it 'in æternam' on our language — Be it so — I will conquer my dislike — But the great objection to the 3rd stanza is that the 4 last lines are an excrescence — and ought to have had some connection with the 4 first which are an application of or rather an antithesis to the last stanza.
>
> I wod not dream of entering into the lists with any poet that ever rhymed much less Keats. But as a specimen of the sort of Sentiment which shod terminate the song in my opinion 'see here.'"

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

Some Greek words follow, and then, in the middle of the page, the very stanza of which I have been speaking, given, with the exception of the word "sadly" for "darkly," some unnecessary capitals, and a few differences in punctuation, exactly as Sir Sidney quotes it.

At the end of November, 1820, Keats was in Rome, and in no state to be consulted about alterations in his poems. Woodhouse seems to have got his knowledge of the poem from a book in which Reynolds copied his own poems and those of his friends, for, at the beginning of the letter, he says: "I return you . . . Reynolds's volume of poetry," and then mentions poems by Reynolds himself, Keats, and Hunt. The truth seems to be that the poem, as Keats wrote it and left it, is as given by Sir Sidney, and that none of the versions printed elsewhere have the slightest authority or value. Evidently it was thought a little too high-handed to change a whole stanza without Keats's consent, and very likely Keats's other friends saw how wretched Woodhouse's stanza was, but when it came to printing they did allow themselves to change the fifth line and so sent the poem out. I do believe, however, that only Woodhouse, Taylor, and Reynolds are responsible, since the *Gem* version certainly came from Reynolds, and, in view of this discussion, I think we may be sure that Woodhouse gave the editor of the *Literary Gazette* the one he used. That the two copies came originally from the same source seems proved, for in both the *Gem* and the *Literary Gazette* "steel" is spelt as here, while Galignani prints the obviously erroneous "steal."

It has often been pointed out that *In Drear-Nighted December* is written in something the same form as Dryden's *Spanish Friar*, but there is one marked difference. Keats does not rhyme his last line with the fourth as Dryden does. On the contrary, he experiments in a really unexpected way, rhyming his last lines with nothing in their own stanzas, but rhyming them all three together throughout.

The chief charm in this little lyric is its form; the chief interest, its reflection of Keats's state of mind. It is not happy in its use of words, and the thought it contains is not very clearly resolved. It is not worthy of the popularity it has gained, nor the space I have accorded it; but it does show that Keats realized the inevitable fact that, in opening some doors, he had involuntarily closed others and shut himself out from certain entrances; that he had turned away from his own boyhood and was set upon a track from which there was no going back. If he were strong with the sense of victory won in part, he was, at the same time, pensive in the knowledge that past days are not lived over, that feelings change before regret is numb. It was probably in some such mood as this that he returned to Hampstead to be with his brothers for a little while before they went to Devonshire.

## CHAPTER VII

### HORIZONS AND THUNDERHEADS

The first salient event of Keats's return to Hampstead was his brothers' departure for Teignmouth; the second, his going to see Kean's return to the stage, after an illness, in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, on Monday, December fifteenth. The effect of this evening was to bring Keats out in print for the first time as the author of a prose article. A couple of weeks later, he tells his brothers that he is substituting for Reynolds as theatrical critic for the *Champion*, while Reynolds is in Exeter, but he does not speak as though this first paper were done in the same official capacity. Perhaps it was, but I rather doubt it, and the difference in the way the two papers are written lends a very strong bias to my doubt. Keats seems to have produced this first paper in the height of enthusiasm. It is in no sense a criticism, being, in fact, an appreciation of the warmest kind. On the following Thursday, Keats again saw Kean as Luke in the tragedy of *Riches*, a modern bowdlerization of Massinger's *City Madam*. These two plays, and Kean's acting in them, were not to be resisted, and Keats dashed off his paper *con amore*. It was probably Reynolds's pleasure in what his friend had done which led to the article's appearance in the *Champion* for Sunday, December twenty-first, and to Reynolds's request that Keats take on his job while he went off for a Christmas holiday.

Keats dearly loved the theatre, particularly Shakespeare's plays in the theatre, acted and spoken as the great tradition of those days made inevitable. Later, one of his chief ambitions was to write poetical drama. What the theatre gave him when such a man as Kean played, can be seen by the opening paragraph of his paper:

> "'In our unimaginative days' — Habeas Corpus'd as we are out of all wonder, curiosity, and fear; — in these fireside, delicate, gilded days, — in these days of sickly safety and comfort, we feel very grateful to Mr. Kean for giving us some excitement by his old passion in one of the old plays. He is a relict of romance; a posthumous ray of chivalry, and always seems just arrived from the camp of Charlemagne."

He goes on to analyze something of the peculiar qualities possessed by Kean, and the technical means which enabled him to achieve his extraordinary results. After a passage which I have already quoted,[1] Keats continues:

> "The sensual life of verse springs warm from the lips of Kean, and to one learned in Shakesperean hieroglyphics — learned in the spiritual portion of those lines to which Kean adds a sensual grandeur; his tongue must seem to have robbed the Hybla bees and left them honeyless! There is an indescribable *gusto* in his voice, by which we feel that the utterer is thinking of the past and future while speaking of the instant."

Here follows a string of illustrations so vivid and pertinent that we who read do certainly seem to apprehend something of the reason of Kean's greatness, no mean thing for a writer to have accomplished, by the way. A shrewd observation is the following:

> "Other actors are continually thinking of their sum-total effect throughout a play. Kean delivers himself up to the instant feeling, without a shadow of a thought about anything else."

There is little more to the paper, and it is marred by Keats's inveterate habit of quotation to point his meaning. The last sentence is pure rhapsody:

> "Kean! Kean! have a carefulness of thy health, a nursing regard for thy own genius, a pity for us in these cold and

[1] See Vol. I, p. 382.

enfeebling times! Cheer us a little in the failure of our days! for romance lives but in books. The goblin is driven from the hearth, and the rainbow is robbed of its mystery."

Here is a queer and very youthful mixture of rhodomontade and intelligence. Keats was evidently writing to please himself, and not taking the pleasure too seriously.

A week later he went again to see Kean, on Monday, December twenty-second, in a telescoped adaptation of Shakespeare's three King Henry plays. This time he was the official reviewer of a paper, and he took the task very seriously indeed. His account of the play, which appeared on Sunday, December twenty-eighth, is written with seriousness and restraint and is full of knowledge of his subject and wise criticism of the feeble compilation he had witnessed. Few analyses of Shakespeare's poetry in his very different types of plays have been better than that led up to by a consideration of his English historical dramas, of which Keats says:

"They are written with infinite vigour, but their regularity tied the hand of Shakespeare. Particular facts kept him in the high road, and would not suffer him to turn down leafy and winding lanes, or to break wildly and at once into the breathing fields. The poetry is for the most part ironed and manacled with a chain of facts, and cannot get free; it cannot escape from the prison house of history, nor often move without our being disturbed with the clanking of its fetters. The poetry of Shakespeare is generally free as is the wind — a perfect thing of the elements, winged and sweetly coloured. Poetry must be free! It is of the air, not of the earth; and the higher it soars the nearer it gets to its home. The poetry of 'Romeo and Juliet,' of 'Hamlet,' of 'Macbeth,' is the poetry of Shakespeare's soul — full of love and divine romance. It knows no stop in its delight, but 'goeth where it listeth' — remaining, however, in all men's hearts a perpetual and golden dream. The poetry of 'Lear,' 'Othello,' 'Cymbeline,' &c., is the poetry of human passions and affections, made almost

> ethereal by the power of the poet. Again, the poetry of 'Richard,' 'John,' and the Henries is the blending of the imaginative with the historical: it is poetry! — but often times poetry wandering on the London Road."

This excellent criticism Keats half apologized for immediately, but wisely and rightly let it stand.

Where poetry was concerned, Keats was on his own ground, and that passage is both scholarly and full of imagination. In fact, the whole article shows thought and careful working up. His notes on Kean's acting are impressionistic, reminding one of the first article, but more coolly, appraisingly done, for instance:

> "His death was very great. But Kean always 'dies as erring men do die.' The bodily functions wither up, and the mental faculties hold out till they crack. It is an extinguishment, not a decay. The hand is agonized with death; the lip trembles with the last breath, as we see the autumn leaf thrill in the cold of evening. The very eye-lid dies."

There were moments during the evening which Keats's sense of humour could not let pass. How well we see the rather miscast actress of whom he writes:

> "Mrs. Glover chews the blank verse past endurance; her comedy is round and comfortable; her tragedy is worse than death."

In both these papers, but particularly in the last, the influence of Hazlitt is very noticeable.

Two more dramatic reviews did Keats do, and neither of them amounts to anything. They both appeared in the *Champion* for January fourth. One was on a modern tragedy, *The Chieftain's Daughter*, in which Macready appeared. Keats was evidently bored with the whole thing. He tells the story of the play at length, and mentions particular actors well or ill, but of these Macready is not

one. The piece was bad and he says so, but in so youthful a tone and with so jejune a finality that we see how far he as yet was from being able to turn his critical faculty upon anything which did not interest him.

The other, and last, of these sallies in dramatic criticism has for subject the Christmas Drury Lane Pantomime, which that year, taking its cue from the success of Mozart's opera, was called *Don Giovanni*. Here Keats begs the whole question of play and observer, and contents himself with writing a nonsensical squib which is not even good nonsense at that. His real opinion of the pantomime, sent in a letter to his brothers, was wiser, merrier, wittier by far, and a better criticism. It is:

> "The Covent Garden pantomime is a very nice one, but they have a middling Harlequin, a bad Pantaloon, a worse Clown, and a shocking Columbine."

With the publication of his pantomime critique, Keats's connection with Grub Street ends, and leaves us wondering how far he could have learnt to overcome his distaste for the mere job work of letters if he had followed out his intention of two years later of applying himself to hack work for his daily bread.

Although Keats was alone in the Hampstead lodgings, he had enough work in correcting *Endymion* for the press, and enough society, to take up his time. We hear of him passing the night with Wells at his lodgings in Featherstone Buildings, dining "the Sunday after you left" (he is writing to his brothers) with Haydon, spending an evening with Dilke, and altogether moving pleasantly in a very pleasant circle.

An event which should have proved most agreeable, but which seems to have resulted in a good deal of a fizzle, was his meeting, or rather meetings, with Wordsworth. At the end of 1817, Wordsworth came up to London on a visit to his brother Christopher at the Rectory, Lambeth.

Crabb Robinson mentions[1] his being in London on December fourth, so that he was already there when Keats returned from Burford Bridge. Naturally Keats was agog to see him, and the matter was characteristically arranged by Haydon, but not apparently as has hitherto been recorded. Haydon, in his *Autobiography*, says that the meeting took place at his house at dinner, the famous dinner of December twenty-eighth, and Hunt says[2] that it was at this dinner that Keats recited the *Ode to Pan* from *Endymion*, while Severn recollected the gathering in Haydon's studio at which the reading took place. Unfortunately none of these three gentlemen can be trusted in matters of date and detail. Perhaps equally untrustworthy, but at least new, is an account of this first meeting with Wordsworth which I have found in an unpublished letter of Haydon's[3] to an unknown correspondent, written in 1845. For the sake of comparison, and the possibility of its being the true version of the occasion, I will quote part of it:

> "When Wordsworth came to Town I brought Keats to him by his (Wordsworth's) desire — Keats expressed to me as we walked to Queen Anne St. East where Mr. Monkhouse Lodged, the greatest, the purest, the most unalloyed pleasure at the prospect. Wordsworth received him kindly, & after a few minutes, Wordsworth asked him what he had been lately doing, I said — he has just finished an exquisite Ode to Pan — and as he had not a copy I begged Keats to repeat it — which he did in his usual half chant, (most touching) walking up and down the room — when he had done I felt really, as if I had heard a young Apollo — Wordsworth dryly said
>
> 'A Very pretty piece of Paganism.'
>
> That was unfeeling, and unworthy of his high genius to a Young Worshipper like Keats — and Keats felt it *deeply* — so that if Keats has said anything severe about our Friend; it was because he was wounded and though he

[1] *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence, of Henry Crabb Robinson.*
[2] *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, by Leigh Hunt.
[3] Author's Collection.

dined with Wordsworth after at my table — he never forgave him . . .

I wish you would send this letter to Mr. Milnes . . .

All Hunt's assertions about this being said at my house is a mistake."

Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton) can never have received the letter, for he followed Hunt and Severn in putting the recitation of the *Ode to Pan* as happening at Haydon's, although not at the dinner.

Keats may have been deeply wounded by Wordsworth's unenthusiastic comment, indeed his not mentioning it to his brothers (unless, which is not likely, it happened before they left Hampstead) would seem to point that way, but that he never forgave Wordsworth we must consider one of Haydon's exaggerations. What he seems to have found it much harder to forgive Wordsworth was the great poet's dining with one Kingston, a comptroller of stamps, whom Keats considered a fool and a philistine. He even went so far as to refuse an invitation of Kingston's to meet Wordsworth at dinner, because he would not go to the man's house. Certainly Wordsworth's treatment of Keats's poem was decidedly curt, but Wordsworth seems to have been in a disagreeable mood that Autumn. Crabb Robinson speaks of his replying to a remark of Coleridge's "by dry unfeeling contradiction." He could not pardon Coleridge some of his remarks in the *Biographia Literaria*, in spite of the high praise which went with them. His general attitude at the time can be seen by this entry in Crabb Robinson's diary describing an evening at Lamb's, two days after Hunt's dinner: "I heard a long time Coleridge quoting Wordsworth's verses; and W. quoting, not Coleridge's, but his own." [1]

The "immortal dinner," as Haydon calls it, took place in his painting-room on Sunday, December twenty-eighth,

[1] Quoted in the *Life of William Wordsworth*, by William Knight.

"with Jerusalem towering up behind us as a background." There were present Lamb, Wordsworth, Keats, and Monkhouse, with, of course, Haydon himself. After dinner, various other friends dropped in, among others, Ritchie, about to start for Africa, and the egregious Kingston, who had begged an invitation. It was a splendid evening, with Lamb in fine cue, uproarious cue, poking outrageous fun at Kingston, who was solemnly making an ass of himself. Finally Lamb was imprisoned in the painting-room, leaving the others stifling hopeless laughter. Ritchie, pleased, undoubtedly, at meeting the young poet of whom he had written so highly to his friend Garnett, was very polite to him, and promised to drop a copy of *Endymion* in the Desert of Sahara if Keats would give him one. Even Wordsworth seems to have forgotten to be pompous, if we can believe Haydon, who says: "It was delightful to see the good humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation and laughing as heartily as the best of us." "It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age," continues its gratified originator, "and my solemn Jerusalem flashing up by the flame of the fire, with Christ hanging over us like a vision."

During Wordsworth's stay in town, Haydon painted him as one of the crowd in his picture, putting him just below Keats and beside Voltaire. This would have brought him to the painting-room several times, and he and Keats must have had at least one other meeting there, for both Severn and Hunt were present at one, and it was probably on this, or a similar, occasion, that Keats gave his *Poems* to Wordsworth.[1] How much interest Wordsworth took in them may be adduced by the fact that he cut only a fraction of the pages.[2]

These were not the only meetings between Keats and

[1] See Vol. I, pp. 126–127.

[2] From information supplied by F. Holland Day, Esq. who owns Wordsworth's copy of the *Poems*.

Wordsworth. Keats called on him, dined with him, and dined in his company. In fact, by January tenth he had, he tells Taylor, "seen Wordsworth pretty frequently." It speaks volumes for the esteem in which Keats was held by the group of literary men and artists whom Wordsworth knew, that he was asked so often to meet a man twenty-five years his senior. Considering the difference of age, it could hardly be expected that anything other than a formal acquaintance should have resulted, but there was more than mere disparity of years to make a barrier between the two men. Their natures could not accord. Keats loathed Wordsworth's adherence to the conservative party, and read in his tolerance of Kingston, and his dressing up to dine with him, a truckling to the existing order. This opinion came out mildly enough in Keats's writing to his brothers that, when he went to see Wordsworth on the afternoon of Kingston's dinner, he was "surprised to find him with a stiff collar"; but his verbal account of the incident had, according to Dilke, something of anger in it. Yet Keats's admiration for Wordsworth's poetry suffered no change. A week later he wrote to Haydon: "I am convinced that there are three things to rejoice at in this Age — The Excursion, Your Pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of Taste." Still he admitted that in everyday life his idol had feet of clay, and when the idol left London at the end of January, he not only did not know of his departure for some days, but when he did, he wrote, again to his brothers: "I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, Vanity, and bigotry." He adds, however, "Yet he is a great poet if not a philosopher."

Keats's justness of vision in regard to the poetical qualities of his contemporaries was seldom at fault, and never influenced by purely personal considerations, at least so far as adverse criticism was concerned. He had, it is true, an undue regard for Reynolds's work, biassed, of course,

by his love for the man; but adversely this did not apply. He felt no particular congeniality toward Shelley, yet when in this December *Laon and Cythna* appeared, was recalled by its cowardly publishers, the Olliers, and a revision and expurgation of the book forced upon Shelley before its republication as the *Revolt of Islam*, Keats was all sympathy. He knew how unpleasantly the Olliers could make one of their authors feel. "Shelley's poem is out," he writes to his brothers on December twenty-eighth, "and there are words about its being objected to as much as 'Queen Mab' was. Poor Shelley, I think he has his Quota of good qualities, in sooth la!!"

From Keats's seeing Wordsworth so often, from his dining with Horace Smith, from his hobnobbing with "Bob" Harris on the steps of Covent Garden Theatre of which Harris was the manager, we can see that he is already an acknowledged member of what we should call to-day the young *intelligentsia*. He is no longer a mere neophyte, but distinctly one of those promising young fellows who count, who knows everybody in a certain *milieu*, and if that *milieu* be not yet the great world of art and letters, it is at least the quasi-bohemian vestibule to it which most youthful artists find its surest approach.

Keats had small patience with even the inspired dilettante. He did not enjoy the Smith dinner, possibly very largely on account of the presence of Kingston. His comment on the conversation of the party is highly significant:

> "These men say things which make one start, without making one feel; they are all alike; their manners are alike; they all know fashionables; they have all a mannerism in their very eating and drinking, in their mere handling a decanter. They talked of Kean and his low company. 'Would I were with that company instead of yours,' said I to myself! I know such like acquaintance will never do for me."

And no more it would. The affectations and cant shibbo-

leths of the amateur of the arts made a stifling atmosphere to so perfectly sincere and natural a fellow as Keats. He felt no whit out of place with Wordsworth and Hazlitt, and perfectly in his element with various lively spirits of an entirely different sort, but in the presence of any kind of attitudinizing he was hopelessly out of place.

For the lively occasions, we are told of a supper and dance at the house of a Mr. Redhall, where the conversation certainly did not lack robustness and the dancing was of a prodigious fury. It is a comment on the manners of the day that Bailey, the budding clergyman, was there and "seemed to enjoy the evening."

Fanny Keats came up to town for the Christmas holidays, and she and John passed a good deal of time together to the complete satisfaction of both. He seems to have seen more of all his friends generally than ever before, and in an easier, more relaxed, sort of way. The fact of having published one book and being at the moment preparing another for the press, gave him a sense of security in his chosen career which was a spur to something I can find no better word for than jollity. Rice initiates him into "a little band," who talk a slang new to Keats and amuse him greatly; also he, and various other cronies, form a club to meet on Saturday evenings, and the joyous playing of concerts continues. Here is a specimen Sunday: "I saw Hunt and dined with Haydon, met Hazlitt and Bewick there, and took Haslam with me." A little note,[1] or announcement, in Keats's handwriting, very likely belongs to this time. We can imagine that Keats had dropped in at 93 Fleet Street in order to get Taylor to join some dinner or card party, and that Taylor, having alleged his inability to leave the shop in case of callers, Keats had dashed off this notice to show him how easily that obstacle could be disposed of. This seems to have been the way of it. At any rate, Taylor preserved the note, which is as follows:

[1] Author's Collection.

"To any friend who may call.
Mr. Taylor's Compts to any Ladies or gentlemen his friends who may call, and begs they will pardon him for being led away by an unavoidable engagement, which will detain him till eleven o'clock to night."

Brown was away for the Christmas vacation, but Dilke remained and was a host in himself. "I and Dilke are getting capital friends," he writes his brothers. With Reynolds, he was as close as ever, but a severe quarrel between Reynolds and Haydon gave him pause and worried him not a little, calling forth a characteristic bit of probing delivered in one of his periodical letters to his brothers, that sort of probing into the bases of human relations and the life of man toward which his mind was forever straying:

"I am quite perplexed in a world of doubts and fancies — there is nothing stable in the world; uproar's your only music — I don't mean to include Bailey in this and so I dismiss him from this with all the opprobrium he deserves — that is in so many words, he is one of the noblest men alive at the present day . . . So I do believe — not thus speaking with any poor vanity — that works of genius are the first things in this world. No! for that sort of probity and disinterestedness which such men as Bailey possess, does hold and grasp the tip-top of any spiritual honours that can be paid to anything in this world. And moreover having this feeling at this present come over me in its full force, I sat down to write to you with a grateful heart, in that I had not a Brother who did not feel and credit me for a deeper feeling and devotion for his uprightness, than for any marks of genius however splendid."

There is Keats, the ethical man that he, in his complete integrity, was, speaking out of his heart's core. It was hard to solve the why of the universe, and he no more than any other absolutely honest man of brains ever solved it; but, in spite of his perplexities as to the dual

quality of his own nature, he never for a moment believed, or advocated, the atrophy of either side of it. Ethical he must be, that was how he saw himself in the face of life, in the face of his responsibility toward his poetry.

The Haydon-Reynolds quarrel brought out another expression of opinion from him which reveals all the tolerant sanity of his attitude toward the men with whom he was brought into intimate relations. It is to Bailey this time that he speaks his mind:

> "It is unfortunate — Men should bear with each other: there lives not the Man who may not be cut up, aye Lashed to pieces on his weakest side. The best of men have but a portion of good in them — a kind of spiritual yeast in their frames, which creates the ferment of existence — by which a Man is propelled to act, and strive, and buffet with Circumstance. The sure way, Bailey, is first to know a Man's faults, and then be passive — if after that he insensibly draws you towards him then you have no power to break the link. Before I felt interested in either Reynolds or Haydon, I was well read in their faults; yet, knowing them, I have been cementing gradually with both. I have an affection for them both, for reasons almost opposite — and to both must I of necessity cling, supported always by the hope that, when a little time, a few years, shall have tried me more fully in their esteem, I may be able to bring them together. The time must come, because they both have hearts: and they will recollect the best parts of each other, when this gust is overblown."

All this time, Keats had been revising the first book of *Endymion*. But, as usual with him, too much gadding was beginning to tell on his health. "I have been racketing too much, and do not feel over well," he tells Taylor on January tenth. Keeping in mind that he was, in all probability, already infected with tuberculosis, the wonder is that he felt as well as he did. But I think we must take his ill-health at this time as being also due to impatience with himself at having passed a month without having written

anything new. He should have been satisfied with his revision of *Endymion*, but he was not. He should have minimized the parties, but he could not bring himself to do that either. The very next week after his note to Taylor, he apologizes to his brothers for a break in a letter to them in this wise:

> "I was called away, and have been about somewhere ever since. Where? What? . . . I cannot for the world recollect why I was called away, all I know is that there has been a dance at Dilke's, and another at the London Coffee House; to both of which I went."

On Tuesday, January sixteenth, his creative faculty woke up in him again, mildly, merrily, but still it was once more awake. He composed a sonnet to Mrs. Reynolds's cat. This is an amusing little piece, a parody of the Miltonian sonnet. We remember that Keats, at Oxford and after, had been poring much over Milton. Because of this Miltonian preoccupation, I do not hesitate to place another poem, *Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow*, as being written about this time, although no actual date, beyond that of the year 1818, can be assigned to it. It bears for motto a misquotation from *Paradise Lost*. The poem is an evocation of opposites, obviously started by the lilt of the opening lines. It is rather neatly done, but is, after all, only a fugitive piece of no real importance.

Well, he had written two poems, but they amounted to nothing. Things pressed, he felt no real desire to write, but he was irritated at feeling none, and the world, his world, went on. He took his First Book to Taylor, revised in a slovenly manner enough by scribblings and alterations made on the sheets of his first draft. Taylor read it and was flatteringly pleased. He even suggested printing the book as a quarto, if Haydon would make a drawing for the frontispiece. Keats was delighted and rushed at once to Haydon, who said he would do anything Keats liked, but

that he should prefer to paint a finished picture from the poem. He also was struck with the First Book, which Keats showed him. The next day, however, he wrote that he thought a chalk sketch of Keats's head would be better, urging the lack of time necessary for a picture, but suggesting that the idea be held over until *Hyperion* was published, when he would paint something from that poem for the new volume. It is evident from this that Keats had not only decided that his next long poem should be on the subject of Hyperion, but that the fact was well known to his friends. On Friday, January twenty-third, he wrote to Haydon agreeing to this change of plan. I give his letter in full:

[1] "My dear Haydon, —

I have a complete fellow feeling with you in this business — so much so that it would be as well to wait for a choice out of 'Hyperion' — when that Poem is done there will be a wide range for you — in Endymion I think you may have many bits of the deep and sentimental cast — the nature of 'Hyperion' will lead me to treat it in a more naked and grecian Manner — and the march of passion and endeavour will be undeviating — and one great contrast between them will be — that the Hero of the written tale being mortal is led on, like Buonaparte, by circumstance; whereas the Apollo in Hyperion being a fore-seeing God will shape his actions like one. But I am counting, &c.

Your proposal pleases me — and, believe me, I would not have my Head in the shop windows from any hand but yours — no by Appelles!

I will write Taylor and you shall hear from me.

Yours ever
John Keats."

In the end, the whole scheme fell through, and *Endymion* was issued in octavo, minus a frontispiece. After Keats's death, Haydon blamed himself for the dilatoriness which

[1] Not given by Buxton Forman. Quoted by Sir Sidney Colvin in his *Life of John Keats.*

prevented him from carrying out Keats's request, but his prompt acceptance and subsequent non-performance were acutely characteristic.

On Wednesday, January twenty-first, Keats went to see Hunt, and Hunt, in great enthusiasm, showed him a lock of Milton's hair which had just been given him. "What a subject!" we can imagine Hunt saying. Hair which had actually grown on Milton's head! By all the gods they both revered, could anything be more moving, more proper to rouse the poetic impulse! Keats, who knew only too well that his poetic impulse needed rousing, listened and wrote. In a letter to Bailey, written two days later, he quotes the poem in full, but, as though the writing it out had revealed its paucity to him, he adds after it: "This I did at Hunt's, at his request — perhaps I should have done something better alone and at home." Very likely that is true, for the poem is not a success. I imagine that "alone and at home" Keats would probably have considered that, on the whole, there was no particular urge upon him to write a poem at all. The idea sprang from Hunt's sentimentality, but Keats evidently allowed himself to be persuaded that he must feel like writing a poem when he saw the hair. He was altogether too prone to think he must write on important occasions, as we shall have more than one opportunity to note when we come to his Scotch tour.

There is in existence a curious evidence of Hunt's anxiety to have Keats write at once. A note-book[1] in which Hunt was writing, or had written, his *Hero and Leander* contains two pages of the Milton poem in Keats's handwriting, which are the first seventeen lines. Why the poem was not continued in the note-book, was probably because Hunt's manuscript went on from there. We can suppose that Hunt, fumbling round for paper, took up his note-book, and running over the pages found two blank and

[1] Author's Collection.

handed the book to Keats. Keats certainly wrote the whole poem at Hunt's, so we can only think that the rest was jotted down on something else.

The poem is, as a poem written under such circumstances could hardly help being, inadequate enough. It is, indeed, worse than that, being full of most unhappy images. The first line, "Chief of organic numbers," is so good that we may be sure it was Keats's utterance of it which caused Hunt to give him the first blank paper at hand to go on with. But what can one say to the lines:

> "Thy spirit never slumbers
> But rolls about our ears."

Milton's wakeful spirit perpetually *rolling* about the ears of posterity is a sad picture, and Keats caps it in the next stanza by addressing Milton as "Live Temple of sweet noise." To be sure, his original expression was "O living fane of Sounds," which, although not too satisfactory, was much better. But the first line of this second stanza ended with "soundest," so the "sounds" had to come out; and then and there, with Hunt waiting for the finish of the poem, Keats changed it to the present reading. How little he cared for the poem can be seen by the fact that he never revised this line away, although he apparently thought enough of it to copy it into his folio Shakespeare.[1]

This Milton poem is one of those which are biographically of considerable importance. In this instance, we learn how very modest Keats still was; how well he understood his own immaturity. The last two stanzas tell the tale:

> "When every childish fashion
> Has vanished from my rhyme,
> Will I, gray-gone in passion,
> Leave to an after-time
> Hymning and Harmony
> Of thee, and of thy works, and of thy life;

[1] Dilke Collection.

But vain is now the burning and the strife,
Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife
With old Philosophy,
And mad with glimpses of futurity.

For many years my offering must be hush'd;
When I do speak, I'll think upon this hour,
Because I feel my forehead hot and flushed,
Even at the simplest vassal of thy power, —
A lock of thy bright hair, —
Sudden it came,
And I was startled when I caught thy name
Coupled so unaware;
Yet at the moment temperate was my blood.
I thought I had beheld it from the flood."

The last stanza contains a double revelation, for in it we see that, no matter how Keats thought he ought to feel at the sight of a lock of Milton's hair, in cold truth he felt nothing at all, which is the reason why I am convinced that "alone and at home" nothing would have been written.

Possibly Hunt praised the Milton poem, or it may have been that Haydon's and Taylor's enthusiasm over his First Book put Keats's perspicacity off its guard, or he may have felt that, considering how he had been wont to talk over his things with Hunt not so very long ago, a relation which that Wednesday visit put him in mind of, it would be almost an insult to keep *Endymion* from him any longer. At any rate, some time before the following Friday, Keats actually showed Hunt his First Book. Of course, he may have done this earlier, before taking his manuscript to Taylor, but in view of the Wednesday call on Hunt, I think that unlikely. How Hunt took this first reading of a poem from which he had been kept carefully away, Keats tells his brothers as follows:

"Leigh Hunt I showed my 1st Book to — he allows it not much merit as a whole; says it is unnatural and made

ten objections to it in the mere skimming over. He says the conversation is unnatural and too high-flown for Brother and Sister — says it should be simple, forgetting do ye mind that they are both overshadowed by a supernatural Power, and of force could not speak like Francesca in the 'Rimini.' He must first prove that Caliban's poetry is unnatural. This with me completely overturns his objections. The fact is he and Shelley are hurt, and perhaps justly, at my not having showed them the affair officiously; and from several hints I have had they appear much disposed to dissect and anatomize any trip or slip I may have made. But who's afraid? Aye! Tom! Demme if I am."

Hunt's snappishness about *Endymion* naturally pushed him still farther out of the circle of Keats's more intimate friends. His poetry Keats had already outgrown. In the copy of Hunt's *Foliage*, published this year, which he gave to Keats,[1] there is not a single mark or annotation, and when we reflect how Keats scored and commented in the margins of the books that interested him, the lack of any such signs is highly significant.

The Milton poem was certainly a failure, but it seems to have loosed a bolt in Keats's brain, for suddenly poetry began to flood in upon him. The next day, Thursday, January twenty-second, as he was reading *King Lear*, he was seized with a desire to write upon it, and immediately composed the sonnet: *On sitting down to read "King Lear" once again.* Writing to Bailey on Friday, he tells him:

[2] "I sat down to read 'King Lear' yesterday, and felt the greatness of the thing up to the writing of a Sonnet thereto: in my next you shall have it."

Why he did not copy it then and there was because he had filled his sheet and had only half a "doubling" left to copy it upon. He did copy it in the letter I have just

[1] Author's Collection.
[2] Corrected from original letter. Author's Collection.

quoted from, to his brothers, written on this same Friday, and in this letter he describes certain changes which he perceives to be going on within him. His account of himself is particularly interesting in the light of his discussions with Bailey, and his questionings and probings into the workings of the universe and the highest peak of development possible to sentient man. This is the passage:

> "I think a little change has taken place in my intellect lately — I cannot bear to be uninterested or unemployed, I, who for so long a time have been addicted to passiveness. Nothing is finer for the purposes of great productions than a very gradual ripening of the intellectual powers. As an instance of this — observe — I sat down yesterday to read 'King Lear' once again: the thing appeared to demand the prologue of a sonnet, I wrote it, and began to read."

Here follows the sonnet, and after it he says:

> "So you see I am getting at it, with a sort of determination and strength, though verily I do not feel it at this moment — this is my fourth letter this morning, and I feel rather tired, and my head rather swimming."

What he was getting at was a sort of shadowy compromise between the life of sensation and the life of thought, that difficult paradox which overhangs all artists who are also thinking men. It is the same subject he had discussed at length in his letter to Bailey from Burford Bridge.

This sonnet, although not among Keats's best, is serious and full of underlying purpose. It contains the fine lines:

> ". . . for once again the fierce dispute
> Betwixt Hell torment and impassion'd Clay
> Must I burn through; once more assay
> The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit."

It should be stated that, in the later copies of the poem,

Keats corrected the short line by putting the word "humbly" before "assay."

Professor de Sélincourt thinks that the "golden-tongued Romance with serene Lute" from which he turned to read Shakespeare was the *Faerie Queene*. I think rather that he refers to all those mythological and symbolical conceptions which had held him enthralled for so long. At the moment, he was reaching out after a poetry of more depth and passion than can be found in even the most extraordinary and beautiful of imaginary evocations. Life, with its simple and huge pathos, tragedy, and mystery, was something which Keats never succeeded in rendering dramatically; but, even so early as this, he had begun to understand that the greatest poetry can be made of nothing else. The lines quoted above represent a new ideal for him, a "certain ripening of the intellectual powers."

Authentic as this mood was in Keats, and cropping up again and again as it does throughout his life, nevertheless we must not expect to find it static. Keats was a poet of many moods, of variously tinted shades of thought and feeling. What was true of him at one time was not necessarily true at another, and it is just this tissue of conflicting sensations which we must study and comprehend if we would know the man and his work as both really were, not pigeon-holed into a theoretical pocket, but free and variable as nature itself. Keats's was a personality rich in overtones, to catch which we must be forever on the watch. One of the tragedies of his life is that he died before he had given the sum total of them adequate utterance.

The poetry vein once tapped continued to flow. After the *King Lear* sonnet came another, written on either Thursday, Friday, or Saturday of that same week, for on Saturday Keats sat down to write to Reynolds. He was in a high flight of spirits, which we may guess to have been induced by the consciousness of having written two good sonnets. However that may be, he begins his letter by

dashing off two little trifles in verse, and then suddenly says:

> "My dear Reynolds, you must forgive all this ranting — but the fact is, I cannot write sense this Morning —however you shall have some — I will copy out my last Sonnet."

This sonnet is *When I have fears that I may cease to be.*

The first two quatrains of the sonnet are nothing less than magnificent, and were it not for the change and drop in theme, tenor, and diction of the succeeding quatrain and couplet, *When I have fears* would rank among the best sonnets that Keats did. But this change is so lamentable that the sonnet, as a whole, fails to maintain itself. I say "as a whole," for, taken by themselves, nothing can mar the first eight lines. In order that the strange droop which follows them, a droop which ruined the poem, may be realized, I must give it entire:

> "When I have fears that I may cease to be
> Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
> Before high-piled Books, in charactery,
> Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain —
> When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
> Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
> And think that I may never live to trace
> Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
> And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
> That I shall never look upon thee more,
> Never have relish in the faery power
> Of unreflecting Love; — then on the shore
> Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
> Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink."

Reading this sonnet with the knowledge of Keats's abortive career in our minds, it seems the unconscious utterance of some terrible prophecy. To the young man who wrote it, it was merely the expression of a vague fear, one of his usual attacks of hypochondrianism venting itself

in poetry; to us, it is the very tolling of the bell of doom. Because of its absolute faithfulness to his feeling at the moment, to what he knew in himself — his power, his abundant possibilities, his haunting perspective — it becomes a door through which we catch a sharp glimpse of his soul. Here is his ambition and his aim, and the lurking devil of his despondence; and here also is the best criticism of his work that has ever been made, for, in its entirety, what is it — all of it — measured and appraised, but "huge cloudy symbols of a high romance"? Is it not — *Hyperion* no less than *Endymion*, the odes, the sonnets, all of his serious poetry — as Dr. Bridges has said of *Endymion*,[1] "suggestive of meaning and full of shadowy outlines of mysterious truth," a characterization only a little less happy than Keats's own, but which amounts to the same thing.

Who the "fair creature of an hour" was, we can have no idea. References to such slight and fleeting preoccupations are frequent in the poems of this period, and they creep into the letters occasionally, but they all seem to refer to ladies encountered, or merely looked at, for the briefest of accidental intervals preceding their total eclipse. The "lady I met at Hastings," vague though she is, is the most solid of these momentary phantoms. The "fair creature of an hour," if she had any existence outside of Keats's fancy, which I am half inclined to doubt, serves only one purpose for us, which is to reveal the fact that Keats realized he could never experience the happiness of "unreflecting love." Alas! Was not the heart of the tragedy of his relations with Fanny Brawne just this, that he reflected upon them until his sick brain turned love itself into a monstrous torture?

*When I have fears* is noteworthy as being a sonnet in the Shakespearian form and almost the first which Keats wrote. I use the singular qualification "almost," because

[1] See Vol. I, p. 459.

his early sonnet, *On Peace*, written in either 1814 or 1815 was, as we have seen,[1] very nearly a Shakespearian sonnet, certainly it was not Petrarchan. Keats, it will be remembered, had taken Shakespeare's sonnets to Burford Bridge with him, and had re-read them there with infinite attention. In the letter to Reynolds written on the night after his arrival, he had said: "I never found so many beauties in the Sonnets — they seem to be full of fine things said unintentionally . . . He has left nothing to say about nothing or anything." Shakespeare's music ran in his head, and he longed to have a try at the same harmony. Why his first two sonnets of this Winter were in the Petrarchan form so familiar to him, it is not difficult to divine. The cat sonnet was a parody, and very likely an impromptu; the sonnet on King Lear was the first poem after his return which took a real hold on him, which insisted on being written, and he was too glad to find himself seized by the creative impulse once more, too much under an old influence, to write in any way to which he was not thoroughly accustomed. But the King Lear sonnet gave him confidence that he could both hold his inspiration and direct it toward those cadences he longed to essay. From this period on, he seems to have found the Shakespearian form more sympathetic, but his several departures from it suggest that it was death rather than decision which make him appear to have given it a permanent preference. As it is, he wrote thirty-eight Petrarchan sonnets as against sixteen Shakespearian.

The two light-hearted little pieces which precede *When I have fears* in the letter to Reynolds of Saturday, January thirty-first, are, first, an erotic trifle, *O Blush not so*, which we need not dwell upon beyond saying that it is not impossible that passages from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* are responsible for some of the concurrences in it. After jotting this down, Keats continues:

[1] See Vol. I, pp. 60–61.

> "Now I purposed to write you a serious poetical letter . . . Yet I cannot write in prose; it is a sunshiny day and I cannot, so here goes, —"

What goes is *Hence Burgundy, Claret, and Port.* This is a pretty bit of rhyming, which turns at the end into something like the expression of a real mood. The chief importance of the poem is the Blakeian ring of the last nineteen lines, but of Keats's indebtedness to Blake I shall speak in a moment. Both these "rantings," as he calls them, bear the hall-marks of being done on the instant. Keats was much in the habit of dashing off into verse when the rhyming mood came on him in the midst of a letter, but it is not difficult to tell which of such poems are copies of earlier drafts and which done on the spur of the moment. When no other indication is given, the quality of the poem is a sure guide.

The new year opened quite pleasantly, with what seemed good auguries. The news from Devonshire was on the whole encouraging. Tom was gaining strength, although the hæmorrhages continued. His London doctor, Mr. Sawrey, to whom Keats took the reports, expressed himself satisfied with Tom's progress. Brown had returned and Keats found dining with him, or with the Dilkes, very much to his taste. He got into the habit of taking his papers to Dilke's and copying them there, chatting at the same time — a dual occupation which did the revision of *Endymion* no service. One of his activities during January and February was going to hear Hazlitt's lectures on the English poets at the Surrey Institution. His comments on them in his letters are all too slight, but it is interesting to learn that he considered that Hazlitt "gave a very fine piece of Criticism on Swift, Voltaire, and Rabelais," and that he was "disappointed at his treatment of Chatterton." Hazlitt had had the temerity to declare that the chief interest in Chatterton's poems was the very youthful

age of the author when he wrote them. Keats, who was probably more drawn to Chatterton on account of his youth than he was aware, naturally found such a statement most unsympathetic. Since he and Hazlitt were, as Mr. Howe happily expresses it, "rubbing elbows in the same society"[1] very frequently at this time, we may well believe that it was Keats's strenuous objections to his opinion which drew from Hazlitt the generous explanation of his point of view with which he began his last lecture of the series.

It is a curious commentary on Keats's state of mind that he did not go to Coleridge's lectures, delivered during the same weeks at a hall much nearer to Hampstead in Flower-de-Luce Court, Fetter Lane.[2]

However delightful the new friendship with Brown and Dilke may have been, it was evidently Reynolds who fitted in most closely with the mood of these early months of 1818. Reynolds was already engaged to Miss Drew and was considering, had indeed by this time decided, to give up his position in the insurance office and become an articled clerk to a Mr. Fladgate, a solicitor, the good James Rice paying the requisite fee. There would be less time for poetry as an embryo solicitor than as an insurance clerk with no studying to do, so Reynolds and Keats evidently reasoned, with the natural result that the two friends wrote and talked poetry as much as they could before Reynolds's incarceration took place, and whenever it so happened that they could not meet for a day or two, they exchanged letters. One of these letters from Keats to Reynolds, written on Tuesday, February third, contains two poems: *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern* and *Robin Hood.*

Although the Mermaid Tavern poem was copied last,

[1] Letter from P. P. Howe, author of the *Life of William Hazlitt*, to the London *Observer*. September 24, 1922.

[2] From a copy of the original prospectus for the lectures. Author's Collection.

it was clearly composed before the other, as Keats introduces it by saying: "Here are the Mermaid lines," as though he had already told Reynolds about them. The lines are not arresting, and we need not linger over them. Professor de Sélincourt suggests that Keats may have got his idea for the poem from *Master Francis Beaumont's Letter to Ben Jonson, written before he and Master Fletcher came to London with two of the precedent comedies, then not finished, which deferred their merry meetings.* But surely the legend of the Mermaid Tavern is part and parcel of the equipment of everyone in the least conversant with the history of English literature. A shrewder speculation is made by Mr. Finney,[1] who thinks that the poem derives from Drayton's *The Muse's Elysium.* Certainly Drayton's description of Elysium contains the germ of the Mermaid lines.

The *Mermaid Tavern* is only a sort of afterthought in this Tuesday letter, which was written to thank Reynolds for two sonnets on Robin Hood that he had sent to Keats, but the fact that Keats brings Robin Hood into the poem, which was written before he received them, implies that the sonnets were the outgrowth of some conversation which the friends had together. The letter begins very charmingly:

> "I thank you for your dish of Filberts — would I could get a basket of them by way of dessert every day for the sum of two-pence."

After some pleasant joking, Keats proceeds to comment on the sonnets:

> "About the nuts being worth cracking, all I can say is, that where there are a throng of delightful Images ready drawn, simplicity is the only thing. The first is the best on account of the first line, and the 'arrow, foil'd of its antler'd food,' and moreover (and this is the only word or two I find

[1] *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney.

> fault with, the more because I have had so much reason to shun it as a quicksand) the last has 'tender and true.' We must cut this, and not be rattlesnaked into any more of the like."

Most excellent criticism truly, and how kindly put! Keats knew the secret of praising first where blame must follow. When Reynolds printed these poems three years later in his *Garden of Florence*, published after Keats's death, the offending "tender and true" had given place to "young as the dew," which, although none too good, is certainly better.

Keats prefaced the copying of his *Robin Hood* by remarking: "In return for your dish of filberts, I have gathered a few catkins. I hope they'll look pretty." They do, very pretty indeed; but the poem is little more than pretty. It is neatly rhymed and pleasantly imagined, and the trochaic metre is carefully and expertly kept throughout. *Robin Hood* is better handled than the *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern*. The picture is clear, simple, and sufficient, which cannot be said of the earlier poem, but both poems spring from one mood, only the mood itself had taken a firmer hold in *Robin Hood*, due, of course, to Reynolds's example.

How much the young men were together at this time can be seen by this sentence at the end of the letter: "I will call on you at 4 to-morrow and we will trudge together for it is not the thing to be a stranger in the Land of Harpsicols. I hope also to bring you my 2nd Book." There could not be enough talk about poetry with Reynolds, that is clear, and the Second Book was copied, this time decently, on new paper. Two days later, Keats writes to Taylor: "I have finished copying my Second Book — but I want it for one day to overlook it." [1] These two references have made possible the dating of an unpublished letter from

[1] Corrected from original letter. Author's Collection.

Keats to Haydon,[1] which I venture, for reasons to be given presently, to assign to February fifth.

"Thursday Morning.

My dear Haydon —

I was at Reynolds's when he received your Letter and am therefore up to Probabilities — The fact is Reynolds is very unwell — he has all Kinds of distressing Symptoms and I am on this account rather glad that he has not spare time for one of our right Sort meetings — he would go to[o] far for his health. I was right glad of your Letter from Devonshire whereby that is I hope one day to see it. Right sorry that you are back today. I hope 'tis not for long. I met a friend the other day who had seen Wordsworth's House the other Week. You will be glad to hear that I have finished my second Book that is if this catches you at your Street door. I have been gadding and did not see your Note time to answer it sooner. Let me hear from Devon again.

Yours like a Pyramid
John Keats.

My Brother George desires to be remembered to you."

At first glance, the reference to finishing the Second Book suggests that this letter was written in August, just before Keats went to Oxford. But this idea falls to the ground in the face of Haydon's distinct statement that his only outing during the Summer of 1817 was a short trip to Oxford and Blenheim, which we know to be true, because it was at Oxford that he encountered Cripps. The only other time when Keats could have said that he had finished his Second Book was when he had finished copying it, and the date of that occurrence is determined by the letters to Reynolds and Taylor. No other poem can come in question, as the only other of Keats's poems which contains a Second Book is *Hyperion*, and the Second Book of that was never finished. But here a difficulty presents itself, there is no record of Haydon's having been in

[1] Morgan Collection.

Devonshire during the Winter of 1818. The evidence on this point is purely negative and collateral, but, if carefully examined, extremely conclusive. There is a gap in Haydon's correspondence between January twenty-second and February sixth; on the latter date he was certainly in London, for he wrote to Miss Mitford from there on that day, the very next day to the one on which I suppose Keats's letter to have been written. There is no proof, but it is certainly not impossible for Haydon to have run down to Devonshire for a couple of weeks at the end of January. The collateral evidence is very strong. In the first place, the letter is dated Thursday morning, and February fifth was a Thursday. In the second, Keats has recently been at Reynolds's where we know he purposed going on Wednesday, February fourth. In the third place, Haydon has written inviting Reynolds to one of their usual evenings, and we know that Haydon tried very hard to patch up the quarrel; Reynolds has refused to go, and we have Keats's word for it that Reynolds rejected all Haydon's attempts at a reconciliation; and Keats is offering a mollifying reason for Reynolds's refusal, as, by his own showing, he was constantly doing. Again, Reynolds is far from well, which at this time was the case; by the end of February he was attacked with a rheumatic fever from which he suffered for months. In the fourth place, there is the evidence that Keats expects to go to Devonshire. In the fifth, we have the curious signature, which I feel sure was put into his head by the very gadding he mentions, for, having presumably "trudged" all the afternoon of Wednesday with Reynolds, he finished the day by passing the evening at Hunt's when he, Hunt, and Shelley wrote their competitive sonnets on the Nile. The connection between the Nile sonnets and this signature will appear in a moment. The message from George Keats is no hindrance to this train of reasoning; it was undoubtedly sent in a letter from Teignmouth. In view of all these interweaving

strands of fact, I firmly believe that the letter is rightly placed here.

Keats was very busy on that Wednesday, for, according to Woodhouse, the sonnet *To a Lady seen for a few Moments at Vauxhall* was also written on that day. If Woodhouse be correct in his date, the sonnet was probably written in the morning, for in the afternoon Keats was off to Little Britain and Reynolds. The title I have used is that under which it is given in the Buxton Forman editions. Lord Houghton entitles it simply *To* ——. There is no real authority for Buxton Forman's title, he derived it from a statement by Woodhouse that the sonnet was addressed to "a lady whom he saw for some few moments at Vauxhall."

The sonnet is in the Shakespearian form which Keats was so determined to master. Here he certainly succeeded. Both Dr. Bridges and Professor de Sélincourt have pointed out its resemblance to Shakespeare's sonnets. This sonnet is a beautiful thing, but too reminiscent of Shakespeare to be as interesting as others which are more personal to Keats. The long pondering over Shakespeare's poems in the Autumn was bearing fruit in other matters than form. It is not, I think, the compliment which Dr. Bridges means it to be to say, as he does, that "it might almost have been written by Shakespeare." For the most important thing in a man's work is that it should be his own, without echo. This sonnet must be admitted to be a programme piece, written with infinite care to a pattern. The first line, "Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb," seems to have determined the poem, and the evocation of the lady seen so long before merely served as a sympathetic idea to go on with. Granted, then, that the poem owes its existence to Keats's recently conceived desire to write sonnets in the Shakespearian form, and the sudden starting into his mind of the first line, nevertheless Keats here produced a very fine sonnet. The first six lines are perfectly

successful; with the seventh his inspiration lags and falls back upon such ancient *clichés* as "rose's dye," "my soul doth take its flight," and "fond ear." The twelfth line is weak, and fails to end the quatrain which is run on into the couplet. For all these reasons, readers at large, who know nothing of derivations or manners, will always repeat the first line, and be unable to recall a single other one in the poem. The sonnet is, in the final reckoning, a study, and a remarkably satisfactory study, but lacking the personal and peculiar touch which is the hall-mark of Keats's best work.

Sir Sidney Colvin's effort to identify the lady seen at Vauxhall with the "fair creature of an hour" of *When I have fears* and the much earlier nymph of *Fill for me a Brimming Bowl* does not seem to me to maintain itself. Apparently, in the Woodhouse Transcripts (*Poems II*),[1] Woodhouse suggests that *Fill for me a Brimming Bowl* was written to a lady seen at Vauxhall. I have not seen this volume, but in the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library, where the poem is copied twice, there is no mention of her. Woodhouse, as I have shown, is often lax in details, tacking data belonging to one poem on another, giving names wrong, and various things of the sort. An instance of this appears in his transcript in the Morgan Library Woodhouse Book of *Hadst thou liv'd in days of old*,[2] which we know to have been written to Georgiana Wylie, but which he states to have been sent "as a valentine . . . to Miss Mary F." Later he refers to the same poem as "To xxxx" with "Mary" in brackets, even though, in this last place, he says that the poem was written for George Keats to send to a lady as a valentine. Evidently Keats preserved the anonymity of his future sister-in-law by inventing a mythical Mary F. as a sop to Woodhouse's curiosity. Considering this, it seems not unlikely that "a lady seen for a few moments at Vauxhall" became a

[1] Crewe Collection. [2] See Vol. I, p. 62.

generic term for any lady about whom he was tempted to write, a convenient alias to put Woodhouse off with, for Woodhouse's questions as to the genesis of poems, however flattering in principle, must often have been a nuisance.

There is another objection to Sir Sidney's theory to be found in the poems themselves, which is that the tone of *Fill for me a Brimming Bowl* has no resemblance to that of the last two sonnets, so that, if all three poems refer to the same person, Keats's heart must have become marvellously fonder during the years when he had not seen her, and such a persisting and increasing admiration would have meant a far deeper feeling than could be assuaged by a couple of sonnets. No, in spite of the romantic charm of Sir Sidney's suggestion, I fear we shall be wiser to consider that such slight episodes, fit to be utilized as needed in poems, were a very usual part of Keats's daily life in his early years, and are to be taken for just what we see them to be worth and no more.

Having trudged with Reynolds, or merely stayed and paid a call on him if Reynolds's "distressing symptoms" prevented the proposed walk, Keats dropped in at Hunt's in Lisson Grove. Here he found Shelley up from Marlowe on a few days' visit to Hunt. This was an excellent opportunity for Hunt's favourite indoor sport — competitive sonnet writing. He proposed it, of course, and the subject chosen was the Nile. The sonnets were to be in the Petrarchan form and the time allowed for composition was a quarter of an hour. Shelley and Keats were up to time, but Hunt, it is said,[1] worked over his poem for half the night. This gave him an unfair advantage, obviously, but however that may be, his sonnet is far better than either of the other two.

For fruitful comparison, here are the three sonnets. Keats's shall come first:

[1] Colvin.

"Son of the old moon-mountains African!
Chief of the Pyramid and Crocodile!
We call thee fruitful and, that very while,
A desert fills our seeing's inward span;
Nurse of swart nations since the world began,
Art thou so fruitful? or dost thou beguile
Such men to honour thee, who, worn with toil,
Rest for a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan?
O may dark fancies err! they surely do;
'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
Of all beyond itself, thou dost bedew
Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste
The pleasant sun-rise, green isles hast thou too,
And to the sea as happily dost haste."

Here is Shelley's:

"Month after month the gather'd rains descend,
Drenching yon secret Æthiopian dells,
And from the Desert's ice-girt pinnacles,
Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend
On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.
Girt there with blasts and meteors, Tempest dwells
By Nile's aërial urn, with rapid spells
Urging its waters to their mighty end.
O'er Egypt's land of memory floods are level,
And they are thine, O Nile! and well thou knowest
That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil,
And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.
Beware, O man! for knowledge must to thee,
Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be."

Hunt's sonnet is:

"It flows through old hush'd Ægypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream;
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands, —
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roam'd through the young world, the glory extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,

The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.
Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake."

Hunt's sonnet is certainly the best he ever wrote, and he printed it in his volume, *Foliage*, published later in the year. Shelley's, one of the worst he ever wrote, was lost until it unexpectedly came to light in 1876; up to that time his *Ozymandias* was supposed to be his contribution. Keats's sonnet was first printed by Lord Houghton, but Keats wrote out a fair copy of it in a copy of *Endymion* [1] which contains many transcripts by Keats of his poems of this time.

Keats's sonnet is remarkable for his slight knowledge of Egypt and his abiding joy in English scenery. There are no "green rushes like our rivers" in the Nile, but Keats can conceive of no river without them. The Nile in his hands, through courtesy and compliment, turns into an English stream.

It seems very probable that Keats harked back to his recollections of Diodorus when he pictured the Nile. In Book I, Chapter Three, of that amazing and amusing history, there is a description of the Nile, where, among other things, is this:

> "It runs down from the mountains of Ethiopia, till it empties itself into the sea . . . In its course it makes many islands."

Later in the same chapter, speaking of the inundations of the Nile, Diodorus, quoting Democritus the Abderite, says:

> "These vapours . . . are driven about by the Etesian

[1] Dilke Collection.

> winds, till they fall upon the highest mountains, which are, (as he affirms, in Ethiopia.)"

In Chapter One of the same Book, we find the genesis for the Nile's fruitfulness. Here is the passage:

> "For this river being very fruitful, and apt to bring forth many animals, yields, of itself, likewise food and nourishment for the things produced. For it yields the roots of canes, the fruit of the lote-tree," etc.

To Keats's prejudiced affection "the roots of canes" become the green rushes of English waters. In the same chapter, it is again spoken of as "the most fruitful and richest river of any that is known in the world." There is a long and vivid account of the crocodile, and pyramids abound, naturally.

Diodorus declares that life was first produced in Egypt, from the action of the sun on the mud of the Nile, and states that

> "The Egyptians report, that, at the beginning of the world, the first men were created in Egypt,"

which statement gave Keats the line

> "Nurse of swart nations since the world began."

For men who

> ". . . worn with toil
> Rest for a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan"

we may imagine Keats beguiled into a remembrance of Ritchie's long journey, even though the route were different.

Pondering on this sonnet on Thursday morning, working over it very likely, Keats's thoughts were naturally full of Egypt when he sat down to answer Haydon's note, and his "Yours like a Pyramid" becomes lucidly clear in the

light of another passage from Diodorus which was probably, in connection with the others, surging round in his head. This passage is so pertinent to the meaning of his expression that I give it here:

> "The three pyramids, which were accounted among the seven wonders of the world . . . The greatness of these works, and the excessive labour of the workmen seen in them, do even strike the beholders with admiration and astonishment. The greatest is built of solid marble throughout, or rough work, but of perpetual duration."

It is, of course, the last sentence which Keats had principally in mind. But may he not also have intended a little joke about the drudgery of copying, copying, copying his *Endymion?*

I do not suppose Keats to have remembered these passages otherwise than generally, unless, indeed, a copy of Diodorus was at Hunt's that night, and talk of it led to the choice of the Nile as the subject for the sonnets, which is quite possible.

On this same Thursday, Keats went to town on "very particular employ in the affair of Cripps" whatever that may have been, and drifted in to the Reynoldses' before coming home. There he found Reynolds's married sister, Mrs. Longmore, and at her request he then and there wrote a sonnet to Spenser and gave it to her.

As we should expect, from his preoccupation at the moment, the sonnet was Shakespearian. There is no doubt that, until the last year of his writing life, Keats found the sonnet, whether Petrarchan or Shakespearian, a particularly handy form in which to encase all sorts of fleeting interests and emotions. He wrote it, always easily, and sometimes surprisingly well. *To Spenser* is rather pleasing, and the idea that to write on Spenser needs the twin enticements of Summer and leisure, is nicely put. Keats, being both in the middle of Winter and in the middle of his long

labour of revising *Endymion*, was in no mood to do justice to the subject. What he did was to beg the question by enlarging upon the idea I have just paraphrased. The "last eve" in the third line would seem to put the sonnet as having been written on the day subsequent to the request, but the date is written on the manuscript by Mrs. Longmore and she is responsible for the account I have given. A tenable explanation is that Mrs. Longmore proffered her request on Wednesday, and when, on Thursday, Keats appeared again empty-handed, teased him into writing what he could on the spot.

Reynolds seems to have been poetizing as much as possible during these weeks, anticipating his forthcoming total immersion in the law. Among other things, he composed a sonnet in praise of dark eyes, presumably Miss Drew's; this he showed to Keats, who immediately countered with his sonnet *Blue! 'Tis the life of Heaven.* In spite of the fact that Reynolds's sonnet followed the Petrarchan mode, Keats clung to his new love, the Shakespearian. Keats's sonnet was written on Sunday, February eighth. A week later, Reynolds wrote his *Farewell to the Muses*, so we can imagine that Monday, the sixteenth, saw him perched up at a desk in Fladgate's office, if, indeed this event were not postponed by his illness.

*Blue! 'Tis the life of Heaven* is neatly arranged as to its juxtapositions, and the detail is both happy and imaginative; but the couplet is a sad thing. With this scanty consideration we may leave it.

So time moved on until the middle of February; composing, revising, and gadding sharing Keats's days. No proofs of *Endymion* were as yet forthcoming, but by February sixteenth he had seen a trial sheet, and had hopes that the proofs would begin to arrive before long. In the meanwhile, he was well ahead of the printers, which was satisfactory; and he was beginning to taste the fruits of a modest notoriety, which seemed to his inexperience de-

lightful, although he had too just a sense of proportion, and too lively a sense of humour, to be in the least overbalanced by them. Writing to his brothers on Monday, February sixteenth, he describes the situation:

> "I am in the high way of being introduced to a squad of people, Peter Pindar, Mrs. Opie, Mrs. Scott — Mr. Robinson,[1] a great friend of Coleridge's, called on me. Richards tells me that my Poems are known in the west country, and that he saw a very clever copy of verses, headed with a Motto from my Sonnet to George — Honours rush so thickly upon me that I shall not be able to bear up against them. What think you — am I to be crowned in the Capitol, am I to be made a Mandarin — No! I am to be invited, Mrs. Hunt tells me, to a party at Ollier's, to keep Shakespeare's birthday — Shakespeare would stare to see me there."

Shakespeare would stare because less than a year had elapsed since Keats and the Olliers had parted anything but friends. But he was near enough to being somebody now for them to think it worth while to bury the hatchet. Only posterity can know what an accolade Crabb Robinson's call was. That the indefatigable busy-body and lion-hunter chose to seek him out, speaks eloquently to the fact that Robinson's set had its eye upon him. His social horizons were widening out in every direction, and he was young enough to enjoy the fact, an enjoyment which he was so soon to lose. Still more important was the increasing extent of his mental horizon. On Thursday, February nineteenth, he wrote a very wise and very beautiful letter to Reynolds, then already ill, and in the letter he copied his poem entitled by subsequent editors: *What the Thrush said.*

> "My dear Reynolds,
>
> I had an idea that a man might pass a very pleasant life in this manner — let him on a certain day read a certain

[1] Henry Crabb Robinson, the diarist.

Page of full Poesy or distilled Prose, and let him wander with it, and muse upon it, and reflect upon it, and bring home to it, and prophesy upon it, and dream upon it, until it becomes stale — and when will it do so? Never. When Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in intellect any one grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting-post towards all 'the two-and-thirty Palaces.' How happy is such a voyage of conception, what delicious diligent Indolence! . . . Nor will this sparing touch of noble Books be any irreverence to their Writers — for perhaps the honours paid by Man to Man are trifles in comparison to the Benefit done by great Works to the 'Spirit and pulse' of good by their mere passive existence. Memory should not be called Knowledge. Many have original minds who do not think it — they are led away by Custom. Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel — the points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine Web of his Soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering, of distinctness for his luxury. But the Minds of Mortals are so different and bent on such diverse journeys that it may at first appear impossible for any common taste and fellowship to exist between two or three under these suppositions. It is however quite the contrary. Minds would leave each other in contrary directions, traverse each other in numberless points, and at last greet each other at the journey's end. An old Man and a child would talk together and the old Man be led on his path and the child left thinking. Man should not dispute or assert but whisper results to his neighbour and thus by every germ of spirit sucking the sap from mould ethereal every human might become great, and Humanity instead of being a wide heath of Furze and Briars with here and there a remote Oak or Pine, would become a grand democracy of Forest Trees! It has been an old comparison for our urging on — the Beehive; however, it seems to me that we should rather be the flower

> than the Bee — for it is a false notion that more is gained by receiving than giving — no, the receiver and the giver are equal in their benefits. The flower, I doubt not, receives a fair guerdon from the Bee — its leaves blush deeper in the next spring — and who shall say between Man and Woman which is the most delighted. Now it is more noble to sit like Jove than to fly like Mercury — let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey, beelike buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be aimed at; but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive — budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit — sap will be given us for meat and dew for drink."

That passage shows so much reflection, and there is such a depth of truth in it, that I have given it practically in full. Possibly the most remarkable idea in it is that "Many have original minds who do not think it — they are led away by Custom." In Keats's day, this would have been a startling and subversive opinion had it ever passed beyond the bounds of private correspondence and risked itself in the great world. Only now, a century later, has some dim knowledge of the kind penetrated the minds of educators here and there. But Keats was no propagandist. What thoughts that came to him he "whispered" to his friends between his letter sheets. Shelley flung his immature half-thinkings forth on every wind that blew, and when the world would not listen corked them up in bottles and floated them out to sea, vaguely content that, like soap-bubbles, he had at least wafted them away. Not so Keats; he sat open to impressions, harking to the promptings of his own ripening intellect, willing to leave all these things to work their will on his mind and his poetry in their own good time. He believed, as all great poets have done, that there is a "Benefit done by great Works to the 'Spirit and pulse' of good by their mere passive existence"; and if his conception

that a world of men following the truths that are in them would all be great is perhaps slightly idealistic, even this cannot be gainsaid if we take it as partial, not complete, fact.

Following this passage, Keats goes on:

> "I was led into these thoughts, my dear Reynolds, by the beauty of the morning operating on a sense of Idleness — I have not read any Books — the Morning said I was right — I had no idea but of the morning, and the thrush said I was right — seeming to say,
>
> O thou whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,
> Whose eye has seen the snow-clouds hung in mist,
> And the black elm-tops 'mong the freezing stars,
> To thee the Spring will be a harvest-time.
> O thou, whose only book has been the light
> Of supreme darkness which thou feddest on
> Night after night when Phœbus was away,
> To thee the Spring shall be a triple morn.
> O fret not after knowledge — I have none,
> And yet my song comes native with the warmth.
> O fret not after knowledge — I have none,
> And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens
> At thought of idleness cannot be idle,
> And he's awake who thinks himself asleep."

That is a poem to stamp any day with gold and crimson. Idle, forsooth! Was any day ever better spent? The long hours occupied in soaking in the sunny day, with his "snail-horn perception of beauty" at its most sentient and eager; the comparatively short period of writing. Yet Keats, half in earnest, half a little overcome by his own philosophizing at the beginning of the letter, ends it with a quasi-deprecatory gesture in this wise:

> "Now I am sensible this is a mere sophistication (however it may neighbour to any truths), to excuse my own indolence — so I will not deceive myself that Man should be equal with Jove — but think himself very well off as a sort of scullion-Mercury, or even a humble Bee. It is no

matter whether I am right or wrong, either one way or another, if there is sufficient to lift a little time from your shoulders."

Now Keats was not apt to be deprecatory in regard to the poems he sent his friends. If they were frankly jokes, he laughed with them and at them; if they were serious, he left them to take their chance, often giving them a sort of appreciative pat as he turned them out for contemplation. Why, then, this attitude toward such an excellent thing as he ought to have known this was? The answer, I think, is that Keats was more completely possessed by this poem than by any he had written for a long while. Nothing that he had done since finishing *Endymion* is at all equal to it. No short poem written since the sonnet *On the Sea* can touch it for intensity and beauty sustained throughout. Keats had been writing a good deal since his return to Hampstead; some of the work had been fairly good, but most of it had been decidedly poor. All the poems written immediately after his return from Oxford read more like pieces that he had set himself to write than *con amore* flashes which would come out. I say this with due consideration for his best work of the Winter, since, as we have seen, even those poems which are the most successful fail in sustaining themselves to the end. In the *Thrush's Song*, he appears thoroughly under the influence of his subconscious mind. I do not know whether any holograph of the poem is known other than that in the letter. I have never heard of one. But I suspect that, if a first draft ever comes to light, it will be found to contain a minimum of corrections, possibly, even, none at all. Corrections are no fault in a poem, often a poem is practically made during correction, but on those infinitely rare occasions when one drops down upon its author in a beautiful ready-made precision, when, I say, such a thing does happen, there is a finality and rightness about it which cannot be mistaken.

I judge that this poem came to Keats in this way because of its form. It came in a hurry and unrhymed. This is more important than it may at first seem. Keats rhymed easily and well, but we shall see later that the recurring rhymes in both the sonnet forms were not completely satisfactory to him. The scheme of the poem has the appearance of a sonnet, but it is in blank verse. Why? Because the lines came into his mind so fast and so perfectly tuned that he would not stop to rhyme them. The significant fact is that they came unrhymed. Here let me make a digression which we shall find in a moment is a sort of explanation.

Buxton Forman makes a very interesting suggestion. He says:

> "Keats seems to have been really writing in a kind of spiritual parallelism with the thrush's song: it will be noted that line 5 repeats the form of line 1, line 8 of line 4, while lines 11 and 12 are a still closer repetition of lines 9 and 10 . . . Having regard to the varieties of sonnet metre used by Keats, his bold boyish attempt at emancipation in making five syllables without a rhyme serve as a full line, and his sonnet protest . . . against chaining our English 'by dull rhymes,' I think it hardly fantastic to suppose that he consciously translated the wild melody of the thrush into an unrhymed sonnet structure."

We may dismiss at once Buxton Forman's "boyish attempt," and his five syllables made to serve as a full line. The truncated line in the second sonnet to Haydon never purported to be a full line, but boldly pronounced itself a short one. This daring attempt at introducing a rest does, however, show how very musical Keats's ear naturally was, and how unboyishly he could flout conventions. Having scuffed aside these misconceptions, there is yet considerable to ponder over in this passage. Buxton Forman's contention is arresting, but it leaves the whole *raison d'être* of the form still to be accounted for from any but a superficial point of view. In the first place,

Keats's impatience with "dull rhymes" in the sonnet did not manifest itself until over a year later. I take issue with Buxton Forman exactly at the word "consciously," for, as I have said, this poem seems to me to be an almost perfectly subconscious one. Is then Buxton Forman wrong about the parallel with the thrush's song? Yes, and no. The thrush, like all birds, repeats his song over and over, and Keats had been more affected by the repetitive structure of the song than he was aware, undoubtedly. On the other hand, the kind of repetition in which Keats indulges here is very common in poetry. Certainly Keats made no effort to reproduce the cadences of the thrush's song. He was not in the least ripe for such an idea to occur to him, nor had any such stretching of the rhythmic possibilities of verse occurred to anybody at the period in which he lived. Let us suppose Keats *unconsciously* saturated with this bird-call repeated again and again, his subconsciousness seized upon the fact and projected it into the poem as an inherent atmospheric necessity. But lying in his mind also were the rhythms of the Shakespearian sonnet. During the two weeks preceding that Thursday, he had written four sonnets, three Shakespearian and one Petrarchan. What more natural, under the circumstances, than that the repetition here should drop into the form of quatrains. But the bird's cadences were not of equal length, and, after two quatrains, a certain monotony jarred across the subconscious free rhythm implanted in Keats's unconscious ears by the thrush and for that reason become symbolic of place, time, and idea. Immediately the repetition takes on, first, a new form, and second, a slightly uneven cadence, for the first figure consists of two lines, the second of one line and a half. But again the sonnet form obtrudes, and ends the poem at fourteen lines — since Keats has been in the habit of fitting such conceptions into just fourteen lines — and by this end the sonnet sense is satisfied in both its manifestations, as the Shake-

spearian sonnet always, and the Petrarchan not seldom, finishes with a couplet, which, from the connection of idea in them, we may consider the last two lines of *What the Thrush Said* to be. The form of the poem then, viewed from the psychological angle, becomes, not a conscious experiment at all, but a permeation of atmosphere infused through psychical and physical being alike, plus a well rooted complex in favour of the sonnet form.

Keats's peculiar excellence lies in a sort of selflessness. Which is odd, because few men have had a more vivid personality than he. It is just his personality which makes his letters one of the most satisfying and remarkable books in English literature. But when he writes poetry, he seems to become a clear glass through which beauty itself may shine. We do not read so much as see through his eyes and with his super-sensitive mind. As he grew and learnt, he acquired some of the architectonics of poetry, at least in certain *genres*. The type of short poem which he calls an "ode," for example, he came to manage triumphantly, and he was making strides in the direction of both pictorial narrative and symbolistic lyric when he died. The marvel is that all his effort and achievement toward the mere building of a poem should have left his delicate recording power intact. But it did. Because he could learn and not lose, is the reason for believing that he had not reached his poetic maturity at the time of his death. To point to the eclipse of his creative power during the last year of his life as a refutation of his farther advance, is unintelligent, for then he was a dying man; to all intents and purposes, indeed, he was already dead, and, as far as poetry is concerned, may, and should, be counted so. When *Endymion* was written, he knew practically nothing of poetic architectonics, therefore we cannot expect to find much sense of structure in that poem, but what we do find is the mirror quality I have spoken of, and that in superb abundance.

It is this mirror quality, but in this instance reflecting

melody rather than vision, which makes *What the Thrush Said* so immensely interesting at just this point in his life. For Keats clung to the sonnet form precisely because it gave him a defined structure and saved him the trouble of finding one. Yet here, at a moment when his desire for change bade him turn from one sonnet form to another, he is suddenly jerked out of himself by the force of an aural impression, and so violently that the result is this varied and repetitive blank verse lyric.

There was also another influence at work upon him, although he scarcely realized it, and his aptitudes were not yet sufficiently advanced for him to take all the advantage from it he might have done. That influence, vague and fitful though it were, was William Blake. There is no specific trace of this influence in *What the Thrush Said*, but there are well defined evidences of it in two of the little fragments usually printed under the heading, *Extracts from an Opera.*

What the opera was, we do not know, nor indeed whether there ever was any opera. Lord Houghton printed six poems under this caption, so it is presumable that some of Keats's friends told him of a projected opera of which these six poems were fragments. But, indeed, so fragmentary are they, and so disconnected one with another, that we cannot glean from them the remotest inkling of what the opera was to be about. Only two of these poems are worth mentioning in detail. These two are *Daisy's Song*, and the one beginning *The stranger lighted from his steed*, and in both of them there is a decidedly Blakeian influence. Dante Gabriel Rossetti long ago pointed out a resemblance between *The Stranger* and Blake's *The Will and the Way*, and Professor de Sélincourt has suggested another to Blake's *Love's Secret.* There is, however, a much stronger resemblance to Blake in *Daisy's Song*, which has to a nicety the tricks of Blake's style in the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*; at

least it has them in the first and last stanzas, the second is less in Blake's manner. For purposes of comparison, I give the poem.

"DAISY'S SONG

The sun, with his great eye,
Sees not so much as I;
And the moon, all silver-proud,
Might as well be in a cloud.

And O the spring — the spring!
I lead the life of a King!
Couch'd in the teeming grass,
I spy each pretty lass.

I look where no one dares,
And I stare where no one stares,
And when the night is nigh,
Lambs bleat my lullaby."

Minus the second stanza, that poem might have been written by Blake. The metre is exactly that of *I love the jocund dance* in the *Poetical Sketches*, and of *The Little Girl Lost*, *The Little Girl Found*, and *The Human Abstract* in the *Songs of Experience*; even the employment of a line beginning with an anapest in Keats's first and third stanzas has its counterpart in the first and the last of these poems of Blake's. Lambs are Blake's most common furniture in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, but it is the last stanza of *The Shepherd* which seems to echo most persistently in the last two lines of Keats's last stanza, for witness:

"For he hears the lamb's innocent call,
And he hears the ewe's tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh."

Keats may never have seen any of Blake's Prophetic Books, for although we know that Dilke was a Blake

collector, he may not have begun his collection in Keats's lifetime. But whether Keats knew the Prophetic Books, with their superb and audacious rhythmical experimentation, or not, there were enough strange cadences and broken rhythms in the *Poetical Sketches*, in such poems as *To Spring* and *To the Evening Star*, to have opened his eyes to something new. The last of these two poems, by the way, may not inconceivably be more than a little responsible for *What the Thrush Said*, for, in spite of its syncopated cadences and over-long and over-short lines, it purports to be in blank verse and has just fourteen lines.

The only other noteworthy thing in these *Extracts from an Opera* is a little expression in one of them which is so charming that I cannot forbear mentioning it. This little chip from an otherwise inconsiderable trifle is "the May-fly's small fan-horns," which is perfectly Keatsean and perfectly delightful.

I should add that my putting the *Extracts from an Opera* here is a perfectly arbitrary act on my part. Lord Houghton assigns them to 1818, and the early Winter seems the only time during the year when they could have been written. The shadowy connection between Blake's *To the Evening Star* and *What the Thrush Said* is my sole reason for placing them immediately after that poem. But where no clues whatever as to their exact date exist, even so vague and hazardous a one as this gains a certain plausibility. *To the Evening Star* is of course "cadenced verse," or *vers libre*, as it is more commonly called, based upon an iambic rhythm; Keats's *What the Thrush Said* is strict blank verse, yet there is a kind of psychologic rhythmic parallel between the two which must not be overlooked.

By this time, George Keats was beginning to be a little restless at his enforced stay in Devonshire. On the twenty-eighth of February he would come of age, an event of unusual importance in the Keats family, for it meant escape from Abbey's jurisdiction. In George's case, this

emancipation heralded the taking of a bold step; nothing less, in fact, than emigration to America, if such a scheme could be embarked upon with any likelihood of success. He was itching to come up to town and prospect for possible chances, but Tom seemed to be gaining in Devonshire and to bring him back to London while Winter was still in the air was not to be thought of. Besides this, George had the greatest regard for Keats's work, and on no account wished to hurry him in his revision of *Endymion*. So matters stood, and seemed likely to stand, for Tom could not be left alone. Keats had written on the sixteenth of February that he longed to be at Teignmouth, but thought he had better finish his Third Book first, an indefinite date for his impatient brothers to reckon upon. We can readily suppose that, without mentioning any particular reason, it was nevertheless some hint of desire to have him come on the part of George or Tom which induced him suddenly to give up some of the gadding and work more steadily. At any rate, on the same idle, and very fruitful, day on which he had written to Reynolds, he wrote to Horace Smith, throwing over an engagement to pass the day on the plea that his brothers were expecting him in Devonshire and that he had some days' work still to do before he could go thither.

Apparently he had no idea that his going down meant George's coming up. George probably did not tell him, realizing what disappointing news it would be. But Keats found out in an amusing manner and with a cleverness of induction worthy of a detective. Writing to his brothers on Saturday, February twenty-first, after admitting that he has been "abominably idle," he adduces, in proof of having "just turned over a new leaf," his breaking his engagement with Horace Smith, and adds:

> "The occasion of my writing to-day is the enclosed letter — by Postmark from Miss W[ylie]. Does she expect you in town George?"

So the cat was out of the bag, and there was all the more reason for him to hurry down to Teignmouth. Try as he would, there was still a lot to be done before he could start. The proofs were beginning to come in, and Taylor, after the manner of publishers, was pressing him for his last two Books, declaring that he should bring the poem out in a month. Things were beginning to look a little gloomy too, for Reynolds was really extremely ill:

> "Reynolds has been very ill for some time, confined to the house, and had leeches applied to his chest; when I saw him on Wednesday he was much the same, and he is in the worst place for amendment, among the strife of women's tongues, in a hot and parch'd room."

Clearly the Reynolds girls were losing favour in Keats's eyes; we suspect them of being too all-pervasive when he went to call on their brother. On the other hand, Dilke and Brown, and the double house in which they lived, Wentworth Place, were increasing in attraction, for Keats says:

> "I am a good deal with Dilke and Brown; we are very thick; they are very kind to me, they are well; I don't think I could stop in Hampstead but for their neighbourhood."

"They are well" is very illuminating. Reynolds's illness evidently preyed upon Keats, facing a long sojourn with the sick Tom. He was worn fine with work, and needed to be surrounded by vigour and health. Brown's robustness and Dilke's sensible interest in things intellectual braced him up like a full-bodied wine. In Brown's positively rude health, we have one of the cords which attached Keats so closely to him in the sequel. Keats was feeding his own intellect very sturdily, in spite of all his poetical work. Humorously observing his own changes of mood, he tells George and Tom:

> "I am reading Voltaire and Gibbon, although I wrote to Reynolds the other day to prove reading of no use."

But the thrushes and blackbirds are singing even though the wind is "boisterous," and he has not read Shelley's Poem[1] yet, and Lord Byron's Fourth Canto[2] is expected out, and he has heard somewhere that Walter Scott has a new poem in readiness, and so the letter gossips on to the end.

The "new leaf" was turned to some purpose, for six days later, on February twenty-seventh, he wrote to Taylor that he had finished the Third Book and begun the Fourth. There was no question of delaying his journey any longer, the time had come when he absolutely must go down and relieve George. But before we follow him to Devonshire, we must take note of a few more poems which we know to have been written this year, and undoubtedly, I think, while he was still at Hampstead, but the exact dates of which being lost, I could not deal with in the narrative proper.

Among these undated poems are two little songs of no particular interest, entitled *Fairy Songs*. The first is the better of the two, the opening four lines of it are very quotable and often quoted:

> "Shed no tear! O shed no tear!
> The flower will bloom another year.
> Weep no more! O weep no more!
> Young buds sleep in the root's white core."

The second song, which begins with the line, *Ah! woe is me! poor silver-wing!* is worthy of no more than a citation. Another, exceedingly poor, song is *Spirit here that Reignest*. This poem was written on a blank page of a volume of Beaumont and Fletcher, but, although the song may conceivably be addressed to the spirit of the plays, it is quite as probable that it has nothing to do with the book. In Lord Houghton's first edition it was printed as an independent poem, but in his Aldine edition it was included

[1] *Laon and Cythna.* [2] *Childe Harold.*

among the *Fairy Songs*, supposedly because of information supplied by some of Keats's friends.

A trifle of little significance, sarcastically inclined, and most likely a joke piece, called *Modern Love* need not be considered beyond its mention.

Two poems of this undated group are interesting, one very much so. These two are the sonnet *To Homer* and the *Fragment of "The Castle Builder."* The first is dated by Woodhouse "1818." My reasons for putting it here are threefold. The first is that there seems very little likelihood that Keats wrote this sonnet at any other time during the year. It does not in the least harmonize with his mood either in Teignmouth or Scotland, and I do not suppose it to have been written after his return from Scotland on account of my second and third reasons. Of these, the second may appear slight and fantastic, but it is not lacking in plausibility. Keats's twelfth line in this sonnet is:

"There is a triple sight in blindness keen."

Now Keats had been set very hard upon Milton by Bailey, and we know from his letters after his return from Oxford that he was still much concerned with *Paradise Lost*, even, it appears, to the extent of giving a copy of it to Mrs. Dilke, a copy annotated by himself. There is no clue as to when the annotations were made, the inscription to Mrs. Dilke is undated, but the volume was probably one used by Keats and only subsequently given to Mrs. Dilke. In view of the circumstance of Keats's interest in Milton at this time, there seems little doubt that the notes and underscorings in Mrs. Dilke's copy were made during the Autumn and Winter of 1818. One of these notes contains this pregnant passage:

> "A Poet can seldom have justice done to his imagination — for men are as distinct in their conceptions of material shadowings as they are in matters of spiritual understanding: it can scarcely be conceived how Milton's Blindness

might here aid the magnitude of his conceptions as a bat in a large gothic vault."

A bat in a gothic vault does not seem a very happy illustration of Keats's meaning. A much better one is the line I have just quoted from the Homer sonnet.

My third reason is, I believe, not the least cogent of the three. It is simply that while during January and February he wrote no less than eight sonnets, on his return from Scotland until the end of the year he wrote no sonnets at all, for his translation of a sonnet by Ronsard cannot be considered an original piece. At the end of the year, therefore, he was clearly not in a sonnet mood, nor did he write another, as far as our knowledge goes, until the Spring of 1819.

*To Homer* takes a middle place among Keats's sonnets. It is not one of the most successful, nor one of the least so. I think we shall do well to rank it among the set pieces, but it contains the excellent line:

"There is a budding morrow in midnight,"

a line which Rossetti told Buxton Forman he considered one of the finest "in all poetry."

The *Fragment of "The Castle Builder"* has come down to us with no date at all, not even the year. I put it here on the strength of another annotated passage in the *Paradise Lost.*

The *Castle Builder* is an evocation of pure fancy. We may take it as a catalogue of indoor "luxuries," just as *I Stood Tip-toe* was a catalogue of outdoor "luxuries." It is Keats's imagination rampant among the richest conceptions he can conjure up. Here is a room "rich and sombre," flooded by the silver light of a full June moon. The moonlight, quivering through gold-fish bowls, makes a "glassy diamonding on Turkish floor." The wind blows softly across a terrace, rustling the leaves of orange-trees.

Within the room are various romantic objects: a guitar-ribbon, a lady's glove, a viol-bow lying across a folio of Anacreon, an hour-glass twined in passion-flowers slowly spilling its sand, a skull upon a mat of roses. A cloud crosses the moon, and the poet calls for lights, which being brought reveal the room still farther, showing, among other things "ebon sofas," black and white fleeces, and, most curious of all, a large mirror on which is written "in letters raven-sombre" the old warning: "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin." But this is by no means the end; there are pictures, mostly Salvator Rosas with a few Titians, and

> "... one, though new,
> Of Haydon's in its fresh magnificence."

Only one picture of Haydon's! To be sure Haydon is the sole modern painter admitted to this remarkable assemblage of *objets de virtu*, but — only one! Here is the evidence of a little wind blowing up a change in Keats's mental atmosphere. And there is a still more significant witness to an alteration in Keats's habit of mind in these lines:

> "Greek busts and statuary have ever been
> Held, by the finest spirits, fitter far
> Than vase grotesque and Siamesian jar;
> Therefore 'tis sure a want of Attic taste
> That I should rather love a Gothic waste
> Of eyesight on cinque-coloured potter's clay,
> Than on the marble fairness of old Greece."

Where did Keats run across that "cinque-coloured potter's clay"? If we knew that, we could fix the date of the poem. Now we must rely upon two rather vague hints as to it, and they both come from the annotated copy of *Paradise Lost*. The first is an underscored passage and its attendant note, in which, I believe, we have the genesis of Keats's poem. The passage from Milton is from the First Book. I give it somewhat shortened:

"Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation . . .

. . . . .

Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven:
The roof was fretted gold . . .

. . .

. . . The ascending pile
Stood fixed her stately highth; and straight the doors,
Opening their brazen folds, discover, wide
Within, her ample spaces o'er the smooth
And level pavement: from the arched roof,
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naphtha and asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky."

Against this passage, Keats wrote:

> "What creates the intense pleasure of not knowing? A sense of independence, of power, from fancy's creating a world of its own by the sense of probabilities. We have read the Arabian Nights and hear there are thousands of those sort of Romances lost — we imagine after them . . ."

Keats's picture is, in tone, treatment, and detail, quite unlike Milton's, and yet there is the parallelism of opposites. Milton's temple is all gold and lamp-fire; Keats's room is silver and black. Yet the shining of the "starry lamps" is duplicated by the moonlight, the "level pavement" by the "Turkish floor," the "brazen doors" by the "four large windows." Still it is not such things on which I would lay great stress, it is on the picture as a whole, inducing Keats to try what he could do in the same kind. However, this is not all. Let us keep in mind Keats's colour scheme of black and silver. There is a note to a long underscored passage, the advance of Azazel's army, in the same volume of Milton. This note begins:

> "The light and shade — the sort of black brightness — the ebon diamonding — the Ethiop Immortality — the sorrow, the pain, the sad-sweet Melody . . ."

Not only is "black brightness" the very hue of the *Castle Builder*, but here are both "ebon" and "diamonding," words carried over bodily, it would seem, and even the "sad-sweet Melody" is remembered by implication, for Keats tells us that his dream chamber is

> ". . . a gorgeous room, but somewhat sad;
> The draperies are so, as tho' they had
> Been made from Cleopatra's winding-sheet."

Cleopatra connotes the Nile; the Nile, his sonnet upon it; the sonnet, his "Moon mountains African"; Africa is Ethiopia. Have we not our poem dated pretty conclusively? I think so.

It is rather amusing to observe that what Milton gave Keats in this instance, Keats passed on to Poe and the French poet, Albert Samain. Both these poets constructed imaginary rooms, and both of these rooms are more like Keats's than Keats's room is like Milton's temple.

Poe's room appears in his essay, *Philosophy of Furniture*. Let us look at it a moment and follow, just for fun, his indebtedness to Keats. In the first place, the time is night. Poe's room has only two windows, but they "open on an Italian *veranda*," which is, of course, Keats's orange-tree-embowered terrace. No moon is mentioned, but the windows have crimson tinted glass, a statement which was certainly intended to imply a moon, for, with no light to shine through them, the windows would be dark, and the hue of them of no importance to the description. Evidently Poe made the same mistake that Keats did in the *Eve of St. Agnes* and supposed that stained glass retains its colour by moonlight. The main tint of Poe's room is crimson and gold, but the windows have inner curtains of silver tissue and the crimson outer curtains are lined with

the same. Keats's "Turkish floor," by which he presumably meant to imply Oriental rugs, is changed by Poe into a carpet of "Saxony material," while the "diamonding" effect of moonlight through the gold-fish bowls is imitated by the application of a gold cord "thrown upon" the carpet "in such a manner as to form a succession of short irregular curves — one occasionally overlaying the other." How many "ebon sofas" Keats had, he does not say; Poe very carefully designates two, but Poe's sofas are of rosewood. Keats's lute is duplicated by a piano, but Poe will have none of his "cinque-coloured potter's clay," instead he desires "four large and gorgeous Sèvres vases." He admits a mirror, not very large and "nearly circular," whatever shape that may be, yet, in spite of its very original contour, Poe's mirror is a poor thing compared with Keats's. Poe, too, will have pictures, and the list of his preferences in this line is not a little odd. There are to be "fairy grottoes" by Clarkson Stanfield, the *Lake of the Dismal Swamp* by Chapman, and "three or four female heads . . . in the manner of Sully." There is more, but farther detail is unnecessary. Poe is writing in prose, in a prose far less inspired than is his wont, but even without reflecting on his style, his heavy and decidedly garish conception leaves him far behind his original.

Samain also writes in prose; in his case, however, a certain poetical charm relieves the too great ornamentation of his ideal apartment. He also sees his room at night, for, in telling us that it has no window, he explains that it is only used by artificial light. Like Poe, he mentions no moon, and indeed it would be useless where there was no window. Samain forces the silver of metal to do duty for the silver of moonlight, since he, like Keats, would make his prevailing colour scheme black and silver. The walls are "hung with velvet of steel-coloured grey, with blue lights in it," at the corners of the ceiling are embossed designs of old silver, on the floor is "a carpet with a silver knap." There is considerably more of this silver, but we

need not enumerate it all; where Keats has given his tone with a touch, Samain requires long and minute description. So much for the silver, and the ebony is not lacking. There is "an ebony table with silver lion's claws for feet," and "an Etruscan armchair, made entirely of ebony, with silver nails." Over this armchair is flung a grey bearskin; Keats's black and white fleeces are used as table covers apparently, and I must say that, in the disposition of his bearskin, I think Samain made an improvement. Instead of pictures, Samain has books: Corbière, Mallarmé, *Fleurs du Mal.* Nothing is more interesting about these rooms than the way in which Keats's and Poe's lists of pictures, and Samain's list of books, reveal the differing periods in which the three men lived. All three are not only true to themselves, but true to their times, and all are curiously local. For who, to-day, would, above all other paintings, choose those of Salvator Rosa or Haydon, Clarkson Stanfield or Chapman, or even, beyond everything else in literature, select the poems of Mallarmé and Baudelaire? Titian is the only choice which marks a universality transcending place and period, and Titian falls to the lot of Keats.

There has recently been discovered another fragment of the *Castle Builder.*[1] Professor de Sélincourt calls it the "opening," but I cannot see any reason to suppose that such is the case. In the first place, it begins in the middle of a sentence, for it is written in the form of a dialogue between a person designated as Castle Builder and some one, apparently a friar, named Bernadine. The scene is laid somewhere out of England, Sir Sidney Colvin thinks in Italy, but I think in France, partly because of the form of the friar's name, partly because Keats speaks of

> ". . . that imperial host
> Who came unmaimed from the Russian frost,"

[1] Woodhouse Commonplace Book (*Poems II*). Crewe Collection. Quoted in the notes to *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt. Fourth Edition.

and certainly Napoleon's troopers who returned from Moscow were prevailingly French. This fragment of twenty-three lines is in a jocular vein full of slang and local allusions. It is broken three times, breaks indicated by asterisks, as though various fillings-in were to be added later. It very likely precedes the printed version, for toward the end occurs this passage:

> "In such like nonsense would I pass an hour
> With random Friar, or Rake upon his tour,"

but it clearly does not immediately run on into the printed text. That Keats intended to keep the vein of fooling throughout when he began, is shown by the first two lines of the published text:

> "To-night I'll have my friar — let me think
> About my room, — I'll have it in the pink."

"In the pink" gives his original intention away, even if the new fragment were not here to prove it. But, when it came to the room, Keats's imagination galloped off with him full tilt. The conceiving of a series of beautiful objects was too much, he could not keep to his key, but became seriously obsessed and eager, and the jocularity vanished forthwith, leaving in its place only a half-whimsical sort of comedy. Probably it was the difficulty of resolving his new fragment with his old that led him to abandon the poem.

A few stanzas of the *Pot of Basil* were written during this February, but as the larger part of the poem was done at Teignmouth, I will postpone all mention of it until we reach the time when Keats was really occupied with it.

How and when did Keats go to Devonshire? That I think we can tell quite easily, or at least within a couple of days. An unpublished letter from Hessey to Taylor,[1]

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

dated "Mar. 6, 1818," gives the chief clue in this pregnant paragraph:

> "George Keats called here to day to say that his Brother the Poet is gone into Devonshire & has left the third Book with him — he will have it here either to morrow or on Monday — The Proofs he wishes to have sent to Mr. Charles Clarke, 6 Little Warner Street, Clerkenwell — Keats went off on the night of the Storm on the *outside* of the Coach."

March sixth was a Friday, and Keats did not go off "yesterday" or "day before yesterday," but "on the night of the storm," which must, it would seem, have been earlier in the week. Now, to go to Teignmouth, one took coach to Exeter, and from there changed into what *Cary's New Itinerary* calls a "provincial coach" for the fifteen miles to Teignmouth. This Teignmouth coach ran only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. The last dated letter we have from Keats from Hampstead was written on Friday, February twenty-seventh, therefore the first coach he could get out of Exeter after that would have been on the following Monday, March second. As he would certainly not have wished to linger a day at Exeter, he would plan to reach that city on the morning of the afternoon that he was to leave it, which by this showing would be on either Monday or Wednesday. Of course, he might have hired a post-chaise to carry him to Teignmouth, but a man who booked a passage *outside* a coach in a storm cannot have been so flush of money as to contemplate travelling post. The fact that he went by night limits the possible coaches which he might have taken out of London. Bearing this in mind, I think we may be fairly sure that he left town by the Royal Mail, starting from The Swan with Two Necks Inn in Lad Lane at seven o'clock in the evening of Sunday, March first, or at half-past seven on Tuesday, March third, and reached the New

London Inn, Exeter, at nine o'clock in the morning of the next day, whichever it was, and from thence proceeded to Teignmouth, where he arrived somewhat less than twenty-four hours after his departure from London.

For a man with incipient tuberculosis to travel on a stormy night on the top of a coach was, of course, madness. Even granted that he did not know the state of his health, it was most imprudent. How horrified Hessey was at such a proceeding is evident by his underlining the word "outside."

The two brothers may have been together for a day or so at Hampstead before John left, but I think it more likely that they crossed each other on the road, for I imagine from George's not bringing the Third Book with him when he went to Taylor and Hessey's on Friday that he wanted a day or two to read it before turning it in. That Charles Cowden Clarke was entrusted with the proofs, shows how intimate Keats's relations with him still were. Keats himself would be at too great a distance from London to make proof-reading practicable, and he had enough to do with the Fourth Book to revise and the Preface to write, and all this with Taylor anxious to publish in a few weeks. It has hitherto been supposed that Keats did not reach Teignmouth until the middle of the month, because the first letter extant from there appears to have been written on March thirteenth. But I think his silence as far as letters are concerned is due to a feverish working at his revision of his final Book, which he finished copying on Saturday, the fourteenth.

George and Tom Keats, like their brother, possessed the happy faculty of making friends. They had been at Teignmouth three months and had already "dug themselves in" in the society of that little town. The family with whom they appear to have been most intimate were the Jeffreys, a mother and two daughters. Mrs. Jeffrey seems to have been a long time a widow when the Keats

brothers knew her, for she is listed under her own name, Margaret Jeffrey, as one of the taxpayers of Teignmouth so early as 1800.[1] Of the daughters, Sarah never married, but Marianne eventually became the wife of a Mr. Prowse, and their son, W. Jeffrey Prowse, was one of the original contributors to *Punch*.[2] In 1830, as Mrs. I. S. Prowse, Marianne published a volume of contemplative and sentimental verse which contained more than one allusion to Keats, then dead. Local tradition in Teignmouth has it that she was in love with him; but, if so, her feelings were not reciprocated. Anything less like love-letters than Keats's few letters to her and her sister cannot well be imagined. But a habit of mild flirtatious fooling seems to have sprung up between these girls and George and Tom, which atmosphere Keats found awaiting him on his arrival. The Jeffreys — warm-hearted mother, blithe and intelligent daughters — must have been a godsend, first to George and then to John in their worry and anxiety over Tom. That John should make a good impression on these new friends was a matter of prime importance to George. A hitherto unpublished letter[3] written to "the steady, quiet Marianne and laughing thoughtless Sarah" shows his eagerness on the subject:

> "How do you like John? is he not very original? he does not look by any means so handsome as four months ago, but is he not handsome? I am sure you must like him very much, but don't forget *me*. I suppose Tom gets more lively as his health improves. Tell me what you think of John."

The first part of this letter gives a vivid picture of the innocent, intimate relations of which I have spoken. Locks of hair are mentioned — treasured from one girl, demanded of the other — and kisses remembered.

[1] From information supplied by Dr. Luke of Teignmouth to Mr. Louis A. Holman. [2] From a letter from Mr. Launcelot Archer to Mr. A. Forbes Sieveking. Bemis Collection. [3] Owned by Professor Edward S. Burgess of Hunter College.

There were other pleasant people in Teignmouth: Dr. Turton, who was taking care of Tom, a physician with a passion for conchology, whose *Conchological Dictionary of the British Islands* was published the following year; by an odd turn of fortune his collection of shells is now in the National Museum in Washington. We hear of a Mr. and Mrs. Atkins, of Mr. Bartlett, a surgeon, of a Captain Tonkin, a Miss Mitchell, and a Mr. Stanbury — just the sort of people we should expect to find in a little town, which is also something of a watering-place, in the early nineteenth century; the list of them reads like a page out of Jane Austen.

What Keats had expected of the Devonshire climate is not said, what he got was rain. It rained gently, steadily, persistently. He was none too husky just then, I fear, although no direct suggestion of ill-health has come down to us, if we except George's statement that he was not looking as handsome as four months earlier. The "gaddings" of the Winter, combined with the work he had managed to get through, had told, evidently.

Keats is very amusing about Devonshire. He calls it "a splashy, rainy, misty, snowy, foggy, haily, floody, muddy, slipshod county. The hills are very beautiful, when you get a sight of 'em — the primroses are out, but then you are in — the Cliffs are of a fine deep colour, but then the clouds are continually vieing with them —" Fresh from the kind of society he had been frequenting in London, he found that of Teignmouth an impossibly thin sort of gruel. He liked the women, but considered the men very poor stuff indeed, and the provincialism of the place got on his nerves. "Moore's Almanack is here a Curiosity" he exclaims in genuine, if humorous, impatience. With his Fourth Book finished and posted off to London, he had time to take stock of his surroundings and he did not find them exhilarating. To give himself the vicarious illusion of companionship, he fell back on letters. The first of which

we have any knowledge was written to Bailey. In it, Keats reveals himself at work on his continual questioning. Toward the end of the letter, he breaks out into sharp expression of both his melancholy and his eternal endeavour to find some stable spiritual ground where he may rest in peace. For the first, we have this strange sentence, purporting to refer to his poor opinion of the Devonshire men, but in reality cloaking feelings far more personal: "O Devonshire, last night I thought the moon had dwindled in heaven —" The next sentence contains the following:

> [1] "You know my ideas about Religion. I do not think myself more in the right than other people, and that nothing in this world is proveable. I wish I could enter into all your feelings on the subject, merely for one short 10 minutes, and give you a page or two to your liking. I am sometimes so very sceptical as to think Poetry itself a mere Jack o' Lantern to amuse whoever may chance to be struck with its brilliance. As tradesmen say everything is worth what it will fetch, so probably every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardour of the pursuer — being in itself a Nothing. Ethereal things may at least be thus real, divided under three heads — Things real — things semi-real — and Nothings. Things real, such as the existances of Sun, moon, & Stars and passages of Shakespeare. — Things semi-real, such as love, the Clouds &c., which require a greeting of the Spirit to make them wholly exist — and Nothings, which are made great and dignified by an ardent pursuit . . . I have written a sonnet here of a somewhat collateral nature — so don't imagine it an 'apropos des bottes' —"

Here he copies his sonnet: *The Human Seasons*, published the following year in Leigh Hunt's *Literary Pocket-Book* with the signature "I." After a few more speculations, Keats remarks, with the charming humility he often evinces when he has been moved to philosophize:

[1] Corrected from the original letter. Author's Collection.

> "Now, my dear fellow, I have not one idea of the truth of any of my speculations — I shall never be a reasoner, because I care not to be in the right, when retired from bickering and in a proper philosophical temper."

*The Human Seasons* is, as we should expect, Shakespearian in form. The version here set down differs markedly from that published the next year, but in neither version is the sonnet anything but dull. It is chiefly interesting as another example of Keats's favourite figure of the four ages of man, which had already occupied him in *Sleep and Poetry* and was to bring from him a very interesting prose passage in a letter to Reynolds two months later.

The probings and questionings which Keats was constantly undergoing have occasioned the spilling of much ink on the part of a host of critics, who have misinterpreted their cause and found answers which I believe to be unwarranted. Keats was very human as a man, but he was a poet through and through. No teasing examination of his meaning can turn him into a philanthropist, or force him to play the rôle of one of those baleful persons who believe in doing good through the medium of art. He believed that art was an end in itself, and, so believing, felt that to produce it was good. He never got very far along the road of reasoning how the good was to come. Sometimes he felt that he was too far removed from the world, that the salvation of his art would come from getting nearer to it. But he never acted upon what was, after all, only a spasmodic impulse. What really troubled him was the dislocation between himself and his time. He is always, in his poetry, struggling to find a new way, a road down which his thought can run unhampered. For brief intervals, in certain poems, he found it. But in its entirety he never really achieved a conclusion. He questions — questions — studies — learns — but always he had outgrown the men he studied; or rather, they steadily led him toward goals which were none of his. So the search continued, and in the end he

had found no solution. Such a havoc in the very centre where there should be calm, in that centre and core of being in which lies the root of one's direction, could not fail to produce restlessness, merging at times into discouragement. When he says: "I lay awake last night listening to the Rain, with a sense of being drowned and rotted like a grain of wheat," we know that all is not right with him. But it was never his power which he doubted, he believed always that his power was capable of enormous growth; it was his direction which puzzled him. His friends never understood this. In fact, he never told them in so many words, but I think they were too much a part of the whole in which they lived to have understood it, even if he had.

The first days in Devonshire were peaceful. Even if the downpour were continuous, his own particular sky was clear. Then suddenly, out of the open blue of this personal sky, the dim outline of a cloud swelled up — that cloud of recurring trouble which was to engulf him in the end. The first sign of its coming was that Tom had a relapse. But he pulled up from it, and things appeared to be going well, and then — then Keats wrote a Preface to *Endymion* and the other edge of the cloud poked above the horizon. To us who know the sequel, all this is like listening to the idle, premonitory clicking of the shears of Atropos. But before considering this Preface, let us stop a moment and take a look at him valiantly living down the days of his moist *villeggiatura*.

Writing to Reynolds on Saturday, March fourteenth, he gives a picture of his environment in a couple of sentences:

> "Being agog to see some Devonshire, I would have taken a walk the first day, but the rain would not let me; and the second, but the rain would not let me; and the third, but the rain forbade it. Ditto 4 — ditto 5 — ditto — so I made up my Mind to stop in-doors, and catch a sight flying between the showers: and, behold I saw a pretty valley —

> pretty cliffs, pretty Brooks, pretty Meadows, pretty trees, both standing as they were created, and blown down as they are uncreated. The green is beautiful, as they say, and pity it is that it is amphibious . . . I have copied my Fourth Book and shall write the Preface soon. I wish it was all done; for I want to forget it and make my mind free for something new. Atkins the coachman, Bartlett the surgeon, and the Girls over at the Bonnet-shop, say we shall now have a month of seasonable weather — warm, witty, and full of invention."

Tom's relapse, as nearly as I can calculate it with the available dates, occurred on Friday, March thirteenth. In the letter to Bailey, written on that day, Keats tells him that Tom "has just this moment had a spitting of blood."

The hæmorrhage was a terrible blow to all three brothers, who had believed that Tom was really much better. George, on hearing the unfortunate news, immediately wrote to John in what appears a somewhat severe strain, for he says:

> "I hope and trust that your *kind* superintendence will prevent any violent bleeding in future . . . Tom must never again presume on his strength, at all events until he has completely recovered."

What does George mean by underlining the word kind? With Keats's sensitiveness, it is hardly possible to conceive him as being anything but kind to the sick brother whom he adored. We have a clue to the word, however, when we remember George's remarks on John's habit of pouring out his feelings to his brothers, and that Tom understood him better than any one. John was homesick and bored to distraction, that is the long and the short of it. It may be that in the momentary lull between showers he wanted to go out for a stroll, but did not like to leave Tom. We can imagine Tom assuring him that he was quite well enough for a little walk, a very little one, and John let

himself be persuaded that such was the case, with the result of the subsequent hæmorrhage. George is exhorting John to keep Tom quiet mentally as well as physically, hence the cryptic, but pregnant, "kind."

In this letter, George encloses a bill of twenty pounds, which he hopes will reach John "before you are quite aground." Woodhouse records that, at one time during the Teignmouth sojourn, Keats was so low in funds as to be obliged to borrow of his landlady.[1]

On Saturday, March twenty-first, Keats wrote to Haydon, a letter which Buxton Forman, quite erroneously I believe, attributes to the fourteenth. The various reasons for my belief would take longer to state than my space warrants. I shall therefore not detail them. The important thing is that, by this Saturday, the Devonshire climate had so far modified its lachrymatory energy as to permit the unexpected dawning of three fine days. When Keats wrote, it was raining again; but the three days had been, and they had done him a world of good. He had "enjoyed the most delightful walks," for these days had been of the superlative kind which Devonshire knows so well how to produce when it pleases. The result, sent promptly off to Haydon, was a set of stanzas, which posterity calls sometimes *Teignmouth* and sometimes *Here all the summer could I stay*; Keats calls them "some dogrel." Geographically and rhythmically the verses are pleasant, but they are chiefly remarkable for the number of real place names which Keats has crowded into them. The mention of white violets and primroses gives us a vivid picture of the kind of walks these were and what a solace they must have been — violets and primroses sparkling with recent rain.

Following the "dogrel," Keats wrote "Perhaps you would like a bit of B-hrell:" and immediately jots down *Where be ye going, you Devon maid?* This is an extremely

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

charming little bit of nothing, a puff-ball of evanescent verse; its value lies in its gay simplicity. Haydon had the wit to find it good. He acknowledged it by saying: "Your br-ell as you call it is beautiful." Dante Gabriel Rossetti pointed out to Buxton Forman that the first stanza of the poem was undoubtedly a reminiscence of one of the songs in Chatterton's *Ælla*. The stanza of Chatterton's poem which Keats is supposed to have had in mind is:

> "Mie husbande, Lorde Thomas, a forrester boulde,
> As ever clove pynne, or the baskette,
> Does no cherysauncys from Elynour hould,
> I have ytte as soon as I ask ytte."

The chief resemblance between the two stanzas, so far as I can see, is the rhyme of "basket" and "ask it." But the real point here is that two days before, on Thursday, the nineteenth, Keats had written his first Preface to *Endymion* and his first dedication to Chatterton. Chatterton therefore was running in his head, and up popped "basket" and "ask it" just when they would be most apropos.

So here we are back at the Preface again, and why? Because Brown had written Keats that the printers had taken a sudden spurt and finished all the copy they had, and were clamouring for the Fourth Book and Preface. The Fourth Book was ready, but the Preface had to be written. Keats wrote it on Thursday, and on Saturday sent it off to Taylor. Here it is:

> "In a great nation, the work of an individual is of so little importance; his pleadings and excuses are so uninteresting; his 'way of life' such a nothing, that a Preface seems a sort of impertinent bow to strangers who care nothing about it.
>
> A Preface, however, should be down in so many words; and such a one that by an eye-glance over the type the Reader may catch an idea of an Author's modesty, and non-opinion of himself — which I sincerely hope may be seen in the few lines I have to write, notwithstanding many

proverbs of many ages old which men find a great pleasure in receiving as gospel.

About a twelvemonth since, I published a little book of verses; it was read by some dozen of my friends who lik'd it; and some dozen whom I was unacquainted with, who did not.

Now, when a dozen human beings are at words with another dozen, it becomes a matter of anxiety to side with one's friends — more especially when excited thereto by a great love of Poetry. I fought under disadvantages. Before I began I had no inward feel of being able to finish; and as I proceeded my steps were all uncertain. So this Poem must rather be considered as an endeavour than a thing accomplished; a poor prologue to what, if I live, I humbly hope to do. In duty to the Public I should have kept it back for a year or two, knowing it to be so faulty: but I really cannot do so, — by repetition my favourite passages sound vapid in my ears, and I would rather redeem myself with a new Poem should this one be found of any interest.

I have to apologize to the lovers of simplicity for touching the spell of loneliness that hung about Endymion; if any of my lines plead for me with such people I shall be proud.

It has been too much the fashion of late to consider men bigoted and addicted to every word that may chance to escape their lips; now I here declare that I have not any particular affection for any particular phrase, word, or letter in the whole affair. I have written to please myself, and in hopes to please others, and for a love of fame; if I neither please myself, nor others, nor get fame, of what consequence is Phraseology?

I would fain escape the bickerings that all Works not exactly in chime bring upon their begetters — but this is not fair to expect, there must be conversation of some sort and to object shows a man's consequence. In case of a London drizzle or a Scotch mist, the following quotation from Marston may perhaps 'stead me as an umbrella for an hour or so: 'let it be the curtesy of my peruser rather to pity my self-hindering labours than to malice me.'

One word more — for we cannot help seeing our own affairs in every point of view — should any one call my

dedication of Chatterton affected I answer as followeth: 'Were I dead, sir, I should like a Book dedicated to me.'

TEIGNMOUTH,
March 19th, 1816."

Had Keats been writing in a diary, that would have been a most interesting entry; as a Preface, it was about as bad as it could be. No critic save posterity could be expected to treat a poem so heralded with lenience. It was too open to what Keats would have called "smoking." Fortunately for him, it was unanimously condemned by the friends to whom he sent it. On Thursday, April ninth, he answered to Reynolds:

> "Since you all agree the thing is bad, it must be so — though I am not aware there is anything like Hunt in it (and if there is, it is my natural way, and I have something in common with Hunt.) Look it over again, and examine into the motives, the seeds, from which any one sentence sprung — I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the public — or to anything in existence, — but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of Great Men . . . a Preface is written to the Public; a thing I cannot help looking upon as an Enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of Hostility. If I write a Preface in a supple or subdued style, it will not be in character with me as a public speaker — I would be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me — but among Multitudes of Men — I have no feel of stooping, I hate the idea of humility to them. I never wrote one single Line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought."

Then, with a last, final spurt of annoyance:

> "I would jump down Ætna for any great Public good, but I hate a Mawkish Popularity."

Nevertheless he gave up the Preface (I fancy he knew that it was bad) and set to work immediately on another, which he sent off the next day to Reynolds who would, he

hoped, find it "tolerable." His eagerness to have this new Preface pass muster, and his weariness of the whole thing, appear in a rather wistful sentence:

> "I had an idea of giving no Preface; however, don't you think this had better go? O, let it — one should not be too timid — of committing faults."

The second Preface is a beautiful piece of writing, but it was poor policy to print it. It was not wise to open one's heart to such gentry as Messrs. Lockhart, Wilson, and Croker.

Many as are the letters of Keats which we have, there must have been numberless others which we have not. Keats and Brown were certainly corresponding at this time, but not a single letter to Brown of this date has ever turned up. This is a pity, for the difference of Keats's letters to his various friends is of great psychological interest. While always holding fast to his own personality, a personality so strong that he could not have concealed it even if he had wanted to, yet to each one of his friends Keats turns a slightly different side. To Bailey, he philosophizes and opens up the heart of his spiritual puzzles; to Haydon, he chats about art, gossips of mutual friends, and falls in, as far as may be, with what he knows Haydon to be preoccupied with at the time; to Reynolds, he talks pure poetry, and often merely rambles on after the thread of his wandering fancies, certain that Reynolds will understand; to his brothers, he is everything by turns, but always in a taken-for-granted sort of way, quite unlike his attitude toward any one else. The richness of his capacity for human intercourse with many kinds of men is one of his most remarkable traits. Did we know the exact relations he had with his different friends, we should, I think, be amazed at the versatility of his sympathies. For instance, James Rice. We know very little of Rice, have no letters from him, and only three from Keats to him, and these

at widely spaced intervals. Yet Rice's personality is very distinct. On two occasions during the Teignmouth weeks he appears to us, and both times with extraordinary clarity.

The first of these appearances is due to a letter which Keats wrote him on Tuesday, March twenty-fourth. This is a letter of rather muddled nonsense. A touch of raciness peeps in at the end, a touch which we gather to have been extremely agreeable to Rice. Rice was very fond of Devonshire. Keats begins his letter: "Being in the midst of your favourite Devon," and in the middle gives a genial little picture, by implication, of Rice in this manner: "Some of the little Bar-maids look'd at me as if I knew Jem Rice — but when I took [cherry?[1]] Brandy they were quite convinced." At the end of the letter, Keats says: "I went yesterday to Dawlish fair," and at once writes down a poem of which only the first stanza has hitherto been printed. Apparently the holograph of this letter was never seen by Buxton Forman. It is quoted by Lord Houghton with a good many inaccuracies, and with the whole of the Dawlish fair poem except the first stanza suppressed. Whether this squeamishness in regard to a very harmless bit of fooling is due to Lord Houghton, or to someone else who may have copied the letter for him, of course we do not know. At any rate, apropos of this suppression, Buxton Forman says: "Whether the rest is observation or (as is more probable) mere rhyme, I cannot say." What it is can easily be seen by reading it. It is Keats in one of the Rice moods, in one of his own moods, and as such does, I think, deserve to be given in full. I copy it from the original letter:[2]

> "Over the Hill and over the dale.
> And over the bourne to Dawlish.
> Where Ginger-bread wives have a scanty sale,
> And ginger-bread nuts are smallish.

[1] There is a hole in the letter just where this word came.
[2] Author's Collection.

Rantipole Betty she ran down a hill
And kick'd up her petticoats fairly
Says I I'll be Jack if you will be Gill.
So she lay on the Grass debonnairly.

Here's somebody coming, here's somebody coming!
Says I 'tis the wind at a parley
So without any fuss any hawing or humming
She lay on the grass debonnairly —

Here's somebody here and here's somebody there
Says I hold your tongue you young Gipsey.
So she held her tongue and lay plump and fair
And dead as a venus tipsy.

O who wouldn't hie to Dawlish fair
O who wouldn't stop in a Meadow
O [who] wouldn't rumple the daisies there
And make the wild fern for a bed do."

I think we can guess, without much difficulty, that this little piece of high spirits was an impromptu, composed on the instant of its writing. Let us be thankful for this mood of hilarity; it was but a moment's brightness in the midst of gloom. For Keats was in no jocular state of mind in the core of him, rather he was struggling like a buffeted swimmer in a tide of troubles. How anxiously he strove to hide his feelings from his friends, can be seen by the letters to Haydon and Rice, with their rollicking verses. The gaiety induced by his trip to Dawlish fair was of very short duration; already, by the next day, the momentary relief of his outing has passed. Very different in tone, touch, and intention is another poem sent to Reynolds on Wednesday. This poem known as *Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds* is, in fact, practically the whole letter, with the slightest of prefaces to explain it. Keats writes:

"In hopes of cheering you through a Minute or two, I was determined will he nil to send you some lines, so you

> will excuse the unconnected subject and careless verse. You know, I am sure, Claude's Enchanted Castle, and I wish you may be pleased with my remembrance of it."

The poem itself is very strange. "Unconnected" it certainly is. We can only account for it at all by realizing that it was probably jotted down just as it came into Keats's head and sent off entirely without correction. It may even have been written directly into the letter. I can say nothing of this with certainty as I have not seen the holograph. What does seem certain, however, is that Keats set out to make a picture solely to amuse and give pleasure to his sick friend. He really did not know how to begin it. A recollection of Claude's *Enchanted Castle* was all he had to go upon, and he was writing plainly against his mood. He was evidently trying after something of the same sort as the *Castle Builder*. In that poem, he had begun with joking, but had presently found himself driven along on the swift tide of imaginative conception. The *Castle Builder*, although he had not been able to finish it, had "points," there was quite a little that was good in it. He hoped for the same sort of luck with the Enchanted Castle. He did not find it. It is no matter that his picture is not in the least like Claude's. Claude's painting, probably known to him solely through the black and white of an engraving, was merely to serve as a springboard from which to leap (if he could) into the teeming immensity of his own fancy. But, try as he would, his take-off failed to project him into the desired atmosphere. Let me change the metaphor and say that his fancy would not budge an inch, but remained, a Pegasus with its wings obstinately folded, stuck to the ground; he was obliged to use both whip and spur to move it at all, and even then only got a little foot-high flutter out of the balky thing. Words — words — words — there are plenty of words, but, with a single exception, not a line or passage pierces the reader

and startles him to admiring astonishment. Keats builds a castle surely, and out of his head (for he has evidently forgotten all but the fact and general impression of Claude's picture); but, however he tries, his castle stays a weird jumble of unrelated dream architectures until his mood flames in and obliterates his original intention, leaving only his sincere bitterness and revolt.

We have watched Keats's depression growing daily, a depression haunted by the vision of a universe of wanton cruelty. Tom is very ill; Tom, not yet nineteen! He himself is tortured by this, and by the constant drain on his time and vitality, not only because of Tom, but because of the thousand and one things that hedge and beset him, among others his growing intellect and his lack of the knowledge of how to satisfy it and gain a surer footing for his poetry. And "the rain it raineth every day," soaking his nerves to an aching pulp. For a man in his state of mind, the weather was annihilating. Just before copying the poem, he tells Reynolds that "The Rain is come on again — I think with me Devonshire stands a very poor chance, I shall damn it up hill and down dale, if it keep up to the average of six fine days in three weeks." He longs to get away from this reality of rain, illness, and tormenting thoughts. In the eighth stanza of the poem, he breaks out:

> "O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
> Would all their colours from the sunset take:
> From something of material sublime
> Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time
> In the dark void of night . . ."

There is no farther question of the castle; from this point on to the end — which is no end, merely an abrupt ceasing to write — the picture vanishes in the cloud of Keats's own questionings:

> ". . . Oh, never will the prize,
> High reason, and the love of good and ill,

Be my award! Things cannot to the will
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought;
Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
In happiness to see beyond our bourne, —
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.

Dear Reynolds! I have a mysterious tale,
And cannot speak it."

No, even *his* words could do no more than faintly shadow the horror in which he was engulfed. Yet it is strange that just here occurs the single memorable passage in the poem — memorable as poetry, that is — one which I have already quoted:[1]

". . . 'Twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand."

Here, and then, he says, he would have been happy, but he

". . . saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore. —
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction."

That very day, he goes on, he has gathered periwinkles and wild strawberries; but, even while so engaged, the everlasting destruction of nature obsesses him, he thinks of a shark, a "Hawk at pounce," even of "the gentle robin . . . ravening a worm."

[1] See Vol. I, p. 99.

Poor fellow! Both his mind and his imagination are at work to flay him. And no one to give him a moment's ease. Strangers all about him; no one to whom he can speak but the sick Tom, who is himself despondent, and whom he must spare, if he can.

The first month at Teignmouth was productive of little but anxiety, misery, and spleen, hidden from prying eyes beneath a cloak of iridescent wit and fun. The weather was really insupportable, it weighed heavily on the spirits of both brothers. But Tom seemed to be getting better, and there was talk of returning to town in April. Keats was planning to go on a walking tour in Scotland with Brown during the Summer, and that was something to look forward to. Yet Tom's very gain appeared to put a spoke in the wheel of Keats's fortune, for the poor boy had grown to have such confidence in the conchological Dr. Turton that it seemed most unwise to move him. This meant an indefinite stay for John, who must have regarded such a change of plan a bit ruefully as it affected himself. Rain — rain — rain — and then suddenly a brief mitigation, which he commemorated in the sonnet *To J. R.*

It has long been surmised that "J. R." was James Rice, and not John Hamilton Reynolds, as Buxton Forman, following Lord Houghton, imagined. The sonnet has hitherto been supposed to date from the Winter of 1818, but a most unlooked-for discovery has led me to assign it, on what I think is the best of circumstantial evidence, to the end of April. I will go even farther and say that it was, in all probability, written on either April twentieth or twenty-first.

The discovery to which I owe my information is the existence of a copy of the third English edition of the old Spanish Romance, *Guzman de Alfarache*, which belonged to Keats. It was known that Keats had owned such a book, for it is listed in the catalogue of his library,[1] but its

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Library. Published by Sir Sidney Colvin.

whereabouts had long been lost sight of. The volume was among those bequeathed to the New York Authors Club by the late Richard Henry Stoddard. Stoddard bought the book in 1878. He paid fifty dollars for it, and sold a sonnet, which he promptly wrote upon it, for twenty-five dollars, so that the whole transaction was an eminently satisfactory one for him. But the result to the world was that the volume vanished out of memory. It was recently found in the Authors Club library by one of the members,[1] who very kindly communicated his discovery to me. The committee of the club at once gave me permission to examine the book, and copy its underscorings and annotations.[2] These have proved neither so interesting, nor so pertinent, as I had hoped, but two inscriptions in the volume are of high importance. The first, on the top margin of the first page in what I take to be Rice's handwriting, is: "John Keats. From his Friend J^s^ R^xxx^ 20^th^ April 1818." The second, at the top of the page containing the dedication reads: "Purchased by me A.D. 1818 — and given to John Keats and upon his death 1821 — returned to me. Rice." At first I did not think of the sonnet *To J. R.*, I thought only of the time, and realized that Keats was in Devonshire. Could Rice have sent this enormously heavy book (it is a calf-bound folio weighing four pounds, two ounces, I weighed it) as a coach parcel? Considering the rates for packages at that period, and the fact that Keats was expected home within a few days (he had written to Reynolds on April ninth that he should "be in Town in about Ten days"), this seemed preposterous. Suddenly there leapt into my mind the recollection that Rice had a great affection for Devonshire; and then, I do not know how, the sonnet *To J. R.* flashed upon me. In that sonnet, it was clear that Rice had come from somewhere for a couple of days only and then departed again. Does not the sonnet speak of "this morn" and "yester-evening"?

[1] Mr. Gardner Teall. [2] See Appendix C.

But I will quote it. To read it is to strengthen the impression.

"TO J. R.

O that a week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warm meeting every week,
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
The flush of welcome ever on the cheek:
So could we live long life in little space,
So time itself would be annihilate,
So a day's journey in oblivious haze
To serve our joys would lengthen and dilate.
O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant!
In little time a host of joys to bind,
And keep our souls in one eternal pant!
This morn, my friend, and yester-evening taught
Me how to harbour such a happy thought."

There is nothing in the letters from Teignmouth to make either for or against the possibility of Rice's having gone down to Devonshire and stopped over a week-end with Keats. April nineteenth was a Sunday. Nothing is said in the letters, but there is a fairly eloquent silence, for, after the letter of the ninth of April to Reynolds, there is no letter until the twenty-fourth, and that letter is to Taylor to whom Keats would not be likely to speak of a visit from Rice, also the letter is a quasi-business one. On the twenty-seventh, Keats again writes to Reynolds and tells him he has heard from Rice that morning; he mentions no visit, probably because Rice had gone back to London and would already have told Reynolds all about it.

It is quite as foolish to suppose that Rice travelled with this mighty tome which is *Guzman* as to think that he posted it, and I suppose no such thing. I believe he bought it somewhere in Devonshire; Keats seems to have bought a black-letter Chaucer there.[1] I do suppose, however,

[1] Letter to Reynolds. May 3, 1818.

that the two friends chuckled over the volume that Sunday, and that Rice ended by giving it to Keats. It had been such a pleasant Sunday, refreshing to the soul of the despondent, friend-starved, literary-conversation-starved, homesick young fellow, shut up at Teignmouth and beginning to fear that his exile might continue for the whole Summer. Musing over the fun he had had with Rice, the pleasure it had been to see him, he sat down and wrote this sonnet. This may be supposititious reasoning, yet I believe it to point very clearly to a fact.

There is something curiously attractive about this sonnet, but I confess I am puzzled to say just why. Probably the answer lies in that penumbra which surrounds all enduring poetry and seems to give it the power of perpetuating itself beyond any reasoning or argument on theme or structure which we have the perspicuity to apply to it. *To J. R.* has no lines nor passages of a "fine excess"; there are no pictures, no sentiments marvellously flashed up by a single word. Yet here is that indescribable thing — charm; although, to account for it, the only clue we can find is that the sonnet is so undeniably *felt*.

I happen to possess an unknown holograph of this sonnet, the only one in existence apparently, and for the sake of the curious in such matters I may note that it contains a variant reading, which is, at the same time, happily cancelled. The last two lines were started thus:

> "This morn and yester eve my friend has taught
> Such Greediness of Pleasure"

but Keats discarded them even in the writing, and put the far better ending I have quoted above.

Rice gone, Keats set himself to contemplate the idea of a Summer in Devonshire. He mused on it in his walks, when he could take them, in lanes "banked on each side with store of Primroses." The result of his self-communing was the realization that, even in poetry, knowledge is valuable.

That, to write great poems, he must know more than his meagre education had permitted. Convinced of this, he writes to Taylor on Friday, April twenty-fourth:

> "I was proposing to travel over the North this summer. There is but one thing to prevent me. — I know nothing — I have read nothing — and I mean to follow Solomon's directions, 'Get learning — get understanding.' I find earlier days are gone by — I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of knowledge. I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good in the world. Some do it with their society — some with their wit — some with their benevolence — some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure on all they meet . . . there is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it; and for that end purpose retiring for some years. I have been hovering for some time between an exquisite sense of the luxurious, and a love for philosophy, — were I calculated for the former I should be glad. But as I am not, I shall turn my soul to the latter."

This is strange speech from a man who has just received a first copy of his new book, a book which has occupied him for over a year, which has worn him, and torn him, and taught him. Holding *Endymion* printed and bound in his hands, turning its pages, what has Keats to say to the publisher who has believed in him? This — for the paragraph I have just quoted is the third of the letter — this, which is the first:

> "I think I did wrong to leave to you all the trouble of Endymion — But I could not help it then — another time I shall be more bent to all sorts of troubles and disagreeables. Young men for some time have an idea that such a thing as happiness is to be had, and therefore are extremely impatient under any unpleasant restraining. In time, however, of such stuff is the world about them, they know better, and instead of striving from uneasiness, greet it as an habitual sensation, a pannier which is to weigh upon

them through life. And in proportion to my disgust at the task is my sense of your kindness and anxiety. The book pleased me much. It is very free from faults; and, although there are one or two words I should wish replaced, I see in many places an improvement greatly to the purpose."

To trace the passage of Taylor's or Woodhouse's editing hand through the pages of *Endymion* is the task of a commentator not of a biographer. All I shall do here, then is to point out that the sight of the volume produced no elation in Keats's mind, no sense of pride; on the contrary, it induced in him a vast humility that he had done so ill, fallen so far short of his conception of great poetry. *Endymion*, at last issued and on sale, was to him merely an illustration of his prevailing dissatisfaction, and the contemplation of it led naturally to his remarks at the end of the letter. We hear no more of *Endymion* for a long time to come, and this silence in regard to it is full of meaning. He had learnt to think of it as a stage already outdistanced; it is the future which occupies him, not the past. He is not ashamed of his earlier self; he has merely outlived the boy he was, although he regards him with tolerance as a fellow who did his best with what equipment he had.

To increase his equipment, that is his present concern. Ten days after writing to Taylor, he tells Reynolds that were he to study medicine again he is sure it would make no difference to his poetry. He is glad that he did not give away his medical books and he intends to look them over again so as not to forget what he knows, and he hopes through Reynolds and Rice to learn something about the law, for

"Every department of Knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole . . . An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people — it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery, a thing which I begin to understand a little."

All very well, but Tom is ill. With a strange, pertinacious wisdom, he adds, "it is impossible to know how far knowledge will console us for the death of a friend, and the ill 'that flesh is heir to.'" Truly the two months at Teignmouth had been agitating and busy ones. However much he may have chafed at them, we can see the maturing effect they had had upon him. He should have blessed them, rain and all, as, beginning with the sonnet *To J. R.*, they brought him some of his best poetry.

I said, a little while ago, that Keats started his *Isabella, or The Pot of Basil* in February at Hampstead. It seems that some time during the Winter Keats and Reynolds agreed to write a book together. The volume was to consist of certain tales from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, freely adapted and made into poems. The book was not to be in any sense a collaboration. Each poet was to write his own poems, but they were to be printed together. Keats was before Reynolds in producing a poem for this scheme, for Reynolds was too ill to think of writing; but evidently, after the first few stanzas, Keats left his poem for the rest of the Winter, probably because he found that he could not concentrate upon anything at all sustained and revise *Endymion* at the same time. Exactly when he resumed work upon it, we do not know, but it is safe to assume that he took it up only after the final work upon *Endymion*, including the much debated Preface, was done.

Writing to Reynolds on April twenty-seventh, he says:

> "I have written for my folio Shakespeare, in which there are the first few stanzas of my 'Pot of Basil.' I have the rest here finished, and will copy the whole out fair shortly, and George will bring it to you."

On May third, Keats wrote again to Reynolds:

> "I have written to George for the first stanzas of my 'Isabel,' — I shall have them soon, and will copy the whole out for you."

Probably he tinkered at the poem for some couple of months more, until he set out for Scotland, in fact. Brown told Lord Houghton that the poem was only just finished when Keats and he started on their Scotch tour, on June twenty-second; but Keats, in a letter to Bailey on June tenth, remarks:

> "I want to read you my 'Pot of Basil' — if you go to Scotland, I should much like to read it there to you, among the snows of next winter."

In the Woodhouse Commonplace Book,[1] at the end of Woodhouse's transcript of the poem, is this inscription:

> "Written at Teignmouth in the Spring of 1818 at the suggestion of J. H. R."

Evidently the stanzas Keats sent for were laid into the Shakespeare, for the volume is in the Dilke Collection and nothing of the sort is written in it.

The *Pot of Basil* represents a transition period in Keats's life. If we take those poems of his which I may call sustained — by which word I mean poems of greater length and with a much more weighty volume of content than is proper to either sonnets or short lyrics, no matter how rich in thought and emotion these latter may be — we shall find that they marshal roughly into two distinct groups. An earlier group and a later one. *Endymion*, viewed from this angle, becomes not so much a new departure (although it is this, too, taken from another standpoint) as the culmination of the same youthful urge which produced *I Stood Tip-toe* and *Sleep and Poetry*. The later group forms itself inevitably of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Lamia*, *Hyperion* (both versions), and the five great *Odes*. In neither of these groups does the *Pot of Basil* belong. It stands by itself, in a sort of no man's land of time. It stretches forward into the future, but also harks back to the past. It

[1] Owned by Sir Sidney Colvin.

completely lacks the gush and gusto of the earlier group, and is without its most glaring immaturities; but, also, we do not find in it any suggestion of the firm modelling and checked luxuriance which mark the poems of the later group. Sentimentality has not yet mellowed into sentiment; statement still lords it over suggestion. What Keats said of *Endymion* in his published Preface to that poem, may serve us here as a perfect criticism of the *Pot of Basil*:

> "The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters . . ."

That passage applies far better to the *Pot of Basil* than it does to *Endymion*. Keats's point of view in *Endymion* is so adolescent that we need strain no point in considering it as boyish. The sustained poems of the later group are clearly the work of a man; a young man, of course, but one whose boyhood is a thing of the past. What irks us in the *Pot of Basil* is the disjunction of its various parts. Prosodiacally, it records an advance; in theme and structure, it stands still; in emotion, it retrogrades. Keats's poetical voice, in this poem, is the breaking voice of a boy in his 'teens; now it is deep and full like a man's, then it cracks, shrills, and becomes once more the shallow pipe of a child. There is no question about the increased expertness in versification here. Keats manages his rhymes and lines far more deftly than he has ever done before; he has shed much of his blissful disregard of the dictionary, and there are no coined words. Even the word "leafits," which used to be considered as such, has its precedents. We find it in no less than two botanical works of the eighteenth century, and again in Keith's *Plant Botany*, published in 1816. The source from which Keats probably derived it was

Coleridge's *The Nightingale: A Conversational Poem*, published in the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798.[1] The *Oxford Dictionary* characterizes "leafits" as obsolete, yet even so late as 1830 it appeared in a book entitled *Insect Architecture*, by J. Remick. But if awkwardness has disappeared, artifice is more in evidence than it had ever been before or was ever to be again. There is a self-consciousness about the poem, an effort at fine writing, which is regrettable Inversions abound, and even at that time poets were beginning to look askance at the inversion. I possess a copy of *Sibylline Leaves* annotated by Coleridge, in which he carefully deletes an inversion in the text and writes beside it the straightforward order of the words. But there are worse things than inversions in the *Pot of Basil*. Keats descends to tortured similes and forced metaphors to an extent that sets one's teeth on edge. One of these occurs in the passage:

> "So the two brothers and their murder'd man
> Rode past fair Florence."

Hunt calls[2] the adjective "murder'd," applied to a man still very much alive, but about to be murdered, "a masterly anticipation of his end." But this is just the type of elegant artifice which Hunt admired. To a more carping taste, it is error and confusion. That Lamb should have shared Hunt's opinion, as he did, proves Lamb to have been a better judge of prose than of poetry, which, indeed, we knew before. The worst of these unsatisfactory attempts at picturesque epithet is to be found in Stanza XLVII, where Isabella is digging up Lorenzo's corpse, in which her breasts are presented as

> "Those dainties made to still an infant's cries."

[1] Professor de Sélincourt says that Coleridge altered the word to "leaflets" in his later editions. In *Sibylline Leaves*, however, published in 1817, "leafits" is still retained; the alteration does not appear until the Pickering edition of 1828.

[2] From Hunt's review of the *Lamia* volume, reprinted by Buxton Forman in his Library Edition.

The suggestion in the passage that Isabella is, by Lorenzo's death, deprived of both past and future, of the lover that was and the children that might have been, is a clever touch and would have been a moving one but for the execrable expression of the idea and the confusion of images involved in it. The word "dainties" cannot be too severely dealt with. It is totally inadequate for the emotion of the scene, a cloying word, and here, before the stark reality of death, not a little disgusting. It belongs to the same family as the "amorous nipping" in *O blush not so*, and brings me to the confusion I have spoken of, for "dainties" refers to the lover's attitude and has no place in the child's. The word here comes precariously near to being vulgar; it is, in fact, the only approach to real vulgarity I can find in Keats's work. That his idea, in this line, was far from vulgar, is quite evident; but it is equally evident that his expression could not reach the level of what he had in mind. This stanza is an evidence of the breaking voice effect I have spoken of. The first five lines, somewhat highly coloured though they are, nevertheless are full and strong; with the sixth line, the tone cracks to a weak falsetto, but resumes its sonority in the last two lines. Perhaps, for the benefit of readers who have not the poem by them, I had better give the stanza:

> "Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon
> Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies,
> She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,
> And put it in her bosom, where it dries
> And freezes utterly unto the bone
> Those dainties made to still an infant's cries:
> Then 'gan she work again; nor stay'd her care,
> But to throw back at times her veiling hair."

The poem is really mawkish. The very thing Keats most feared and hated overtook him in it, and the sad part is that it is mawkish in exactly the same way that Hunt is

mawkish in *Rimini*. In spite of his firmer grasp and vivid envisioning of his subject, there is not a little in the *Pot of Basil* which reminds one of *Rimini*. It is just this note which I had in mind when I said that as far as emotion was concerned the poem was a retrogression. The emotion is distinctly a harking back to the Huntian mood of the year before. Even Hunt's jaunty colloquialism is not absent, for witness Lorenzo's farewell to Isabella: "Good bye! I'll soon be back."

Yet, with all its infelicities, the poem has a dramatic quality which far outdistances anything Keats had previously done. The digging up of Lorenzo's body is a remarkably well-managed combination of horror and pathos. And here, and in the succeeding stanzas where the planting of Lorenzo's head in the basil pot is described, Keats for once overcomes his usual abhorrence of the grim and tells his tale in a manner that conveys, and often states without any attempt at evasion, the loathly details of the action. These are, indeed, as he says himself of something else, "accomplished horrors," yet around and infusing them there is the cleansing sobriety of grief. It is the presentation of grief that lifts the end of the poem far above the embroidered beginning. To Keats's set, to whom embroidery of this sort was by no means disagreeable, the poem stood as a beautiful example of love and woe. That it has aged beyond any of Keats's sustained poems is natural. Fine writing bears its doom within itself; only the simplicity and strength of plain speaking can carry down the years. Fashion changes, but the heart of man is a changeless thing and rules beyond the customs of ephemeral moments.

Curiously enough, Keats's realism stands out clearly in this poem. Two notable examples are to be found in Stanzas XLI and XLV. The first contains this passage:

> "As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
> Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,

We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,
And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil."

We have already noticed how well Keats can describe the on-coming of sleep.[1] Here he gives the very picture of a night when sleep will not come. Genius is behind such realism as this. Professor de Sélincourt has recorded a conversation between Browning and a friend[2] in which it is said that Browning "quoted these lines as an instance of Keats's supreme mastery of language, adding, 'They have for me an additional pathos because they record a personal experience. It is what Keats, poor fellow, must himself have seen many a night in the early stages of consumption!'" Keats was in the early stages of consumption undoubtedly, little as he suspected the fact, but even without having consumption one may have experienced just such a vision of bright and seething darkness as Keats describes. How many nights during the dreary sojourn at Teignmouth must he have undergone such an experience!

The other realistic passage is this:

"Who hath not loiter'd in a green church-yard,
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see scull, coffin'd bones, and funeral stole;
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr'd,
And filling it once more with human soul?"

The value of that passage, apart from its excellence as poetry, lies in its morbidness, for this is a morbidness common to all human beings possessed of imagination. With most imaginative persons, however, morbidness of this kind takes one of two forms. Either they shun it, and conceal, as far as possible from themselves and invariably from others, the fact that they are the victims of it; or they go to the other extreme and flaunt the quality, tossing it above their heads like a plume. Poe, for instance,

[1] See Vol. I, pp. 350, 352. [2] Mr. F. S. Storr.

loves this sort of thing, as does Baudelaire and a host of other writers. Keats's originality and sincerity lie in the fact that he falls into neither category. He neither flees nor flaunts; he merely states what is to him a plain truth. It is admirable, and a touchstone by which to gauge both his courage and his innate sanity. He sees as a man of imagination sees, and records as a man of science records. For it cannot be too strongly insisted upon that both these aspects of mind were in Keats, and that gradually pushing itself through the crust of his period was a strangely modern man. Nothing shows this modernity in Keats better than the fact that he came to distrust the *Pot of Basil* profoundly. There is much of this a year later, which we shall notice all in good time. His friends continued to dote upon the poem, but he knew better; he was a most competent critic.

The decided change in literary taste which has marked the beginning of the twentieth century has displaced the *Pot of Basil* from the position it has hitherto held in Keats's work. The poem has not worn well. The very fact that it was so admired in its day shows how perfectly it fitted that day. But what Keats thought about it in 1819 is what the world thinks about it now. For one reader of the *Pot of Basil* to-day, there are probably hundreds of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Lamia*, and the *Odes*. Even *Endymion*, in the fragments which are all most people know of it, would count more readers than the *Pot of Basil*, I believe, if a tally could be made. If, *con amore*, the poem is not loved as it used to be, it is still interesting as a mental costume plate of a bygone era, and also, and more, because of its function as an analysis of the developing methods by which Keats approached the great creations of his last period.

I think it not fantastic to say that Keats definitely entered on his last period with a little fragment of a poem, fourteen lines long, written on Friday, May first, 1818. This fragment of an unfinished *Ode to Maia*, is, in its kind,

as excellent a piece of work as Keats ever did, and would be a perfect thing but for the false rhyme of Maia and Baiæ; and the realization that Keats probably pronounced the two words Maya and Baya only makes the matter worse. Keats's knowledge of classical pronunciation was almost nil. There exists a copy of the proof-sheets of *Lamia*,[1] corrected by Woodhouse, with the classical names in the poem all carefully listed and the pronunciations indicated, undoubtedly for Keats's guidance.

Apart from this one infelicity, the fragment is utterly beautiful. Beauty of thought, beauty of phrase, beauty of movement — they are all here, joined to a music which eludes, baffles, and enchants, no matter how often the poem is read. Here is the clear, reticent line so entirely missing in the *Pot of Basil*. The quiet of the poem is rest and refreshment; the sober strength of it, abiding peace. It floats into our ears like a melody come from a wide distance; it is solace to questioning, an answer to many doubts. The "span of heaven" stretches above it, and we of the "few ears" listen and are content. Greek, is it — as critic after critic has said? No, scarcely Greek. The Greeks spoke in other accents than this. They, too, understood the combination of simplicity and strength, but theirs was neither this simplicity nor this strength. It is England speaking here, and the Englishman who speaks is John Keats. This is Keats at his rare best. To what sprouting of impulse the poem owes its inception, we do not know. It may have been an unconscious reaction from the vivid, restless style of the *Pot of Basil*. That the *Ode to Maia* is one of that small group of poems which flowered suddenly, inconceivably, in Keats's mind from no volition on his part, seems evident. Why it was not finished, the lines themselves declare. Nothing farther came, and Keats was too wise to attempt to finish by force of mere desire what the something in him which he could by no means guide

[1] White Collection.

had begun. On May third, he wrote to Reynolds that he intended to finish the *Ode* "all in good time." But apparently the "good time" was not vouchsafed him, for no more was ever written.

It is a curious commentary on Keats's changing moods that the letter in which he copied his *Fragment of an Ode to Maia*, contains not only the passage on the necessity for knowledge which I quoted some pages back, but a long thoughtful consideration of the different types of mind of Wordsworth and Milton. The passage is too long to give in full; but one part of it, where Keats again refers to the different ages of man, and this time under a new figure, cannot be omitted. We have only to remember his ages of man in *Sleep and Poetry* to see how far he has outdistanced the conceptions of a year and a half before:

> "I compare human life to a large Mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the Infant, or Thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us — we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man — of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression — whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open — but all dark — all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil; we are in a mist, *we* are now in that state, we feel the 'Burden of

> the Mystery.' To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive, when he wrote 'Tintern Abbey,' and it seems to me that his genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them."

Beyond this, he does not go, but returns to Wordsworth and Milton. I fain would copy all, yet this is enough. For indeed the passage he wanders in is dark. "Tom has spit a *leetle* blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper — but I know — the truth is, there is something real in the World." Something real in the world — the religion that is left him, to which he must perforce cling. And only six months before, at Burford Bridge, a sparrow hopping about the gravel could set him to rights! How inconceivably sad, the life of this man! Yet, "the leaves have been out here for many a day"— so his observation of beauty strives again to solace him.

Tom's second hæmorrhage may have shaken his faith in Dr. Turton, or else the evident uselessness of a longer exile operated with his own and John's desire to be in town to determine the brothers to go thither at once. A journey by coach was not to be thought of. No, they must post to London by way of Bridport and Dorchester as the shortest route. One day then (exactly which we do not know, but it was probably during this first week of May), a post-chaise jangled up to the door of the house opposite the bonnet-shop. At the window stood poor little Tom, hoping for one more glimpse of his friends, the Jeffreys; but the doctor had forbidden the agitation of good-byes, and they did not come. John brought him their farewells, and the two brothers got into the chaise and were driven away under the full-leaved trees to London and the brooding future.

END OF VOLUME I

# JOHN KEATS

VOLUME II

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# JOHN KEATS

## CHAPTER VIII

### A WALKING TRIP TO SCOTLAND

The first day's drive carried the travellers through Exeter to Honiton, from which place Keats sent a short note back to Mrs. Jeffrey by the returning chaise. In it, he told her that Tom had "borne his Journey thus far remarkably well." Thus far, but no farther. On reaching Bridport the next day, Tom had a particularly severe hæmorrhage, which kept them prisoners in the inn there for some days. There is no means of knowing how long it was before Tom was able to resume the journey, for we have no letters between Keats's to Reynolds from Teignmouth on May third, and one from Tom to the Miss Jeffreys written from Hampstead on May seventeenth, when they had apparently been back for some time. However many the days were, they were terribly anxious and miserable ones for the two young fellows, caged up in a small town where they knew no single soul, with a strange doctor, and only such comforts as the Bull or the Green Lion (whichever inn they were at) could afford. At last, however, Tom was pronounced well enough to travel, and they started again, taking the journey by easy stages and, as far as we can judge, reaching Hampstead at the end of the fourth day. Tom's letter [1] to the Jeffrey girls, not before published, tells the story of the trip, and many other things of importance. It is too long and too discursive to print in

[1] Bemis Collection.

full, some parts of it, however, must be quoted; for one reason, because they give such a vivid picture of the writer:

"Hampstead Sunday.
May 1818.

My Dear Maryann.

We received your Mother's Letter by Mrs. Atkins which prevented my writing so soon as I intended that the Letter might accompany the Book John promised you, and be delivered by Mrs. A. on her return. I thank you all for your kind solicitude. the rest of the journey pass'd off pretty well after we had left Bridport in Dorsetshire. I was very ill there and lost much blood — we travell'd a hundred miles in the last two days. I found myself much better at the end of the journey than when I left *Tartary* alias Teignmouth — the Doctor was surprised to see me looking so well, as were all my Friends — they insisted that my illness was all mistaken Fancy and on this presumption excited me to laughing and merriment which has deranged me a little — however it appears that confinement and low spirits have been my chief enemies, and I promise myself a gradual recovery — this will be grateful news to you. Our leave-taking was more formal than it might have been: and at the time I cursed the Doctor, but now I think it better as it happen'd — I was at the Window to stop you as you return'd from the Cottage, but you did not come our way — it did not require John's assurance to convince me that you felt our departure . . . I hope Mr. Stanbury &ct — is elated to twenty Pounds a year and that Waltzing will be admitted to the Teignmouth and other Town and Country Ball rooms in Sarah's time . . . Convey my compliments to Miss Michell and thank her for the present — remember me to Captain Tonkin and Mr. Bartlett if he should come your way in the Labyrinth of Teignmouth — tell Captain T. if he goes on his projected Tour to Italy we may perhaps meet — this leads me to a development of my plan which I am fond to think about if I should alter it. In [letter torn] weeks I shall be here alone and I hope well. John will have set out on his Northern Expedition George on this Western and I shall be preparing for mine to the South. John's will take four months at the end of that time he expects to

have atchieved two thousand Miles mostly on Foot. George embarks for America. — I shall either go by vessell to some port in the Adriatic or down the Rhine through Switzerland and the Alps into Italy most like the Town of Paiva [Pavia] — there to remain untill I have acquired a stock of Knowledge and strength which will better enable me to bustle through the world. I am persuaded this is the best way of killing time — now if I should go by vessell and the port of Plymouth has communication with that part I will take Teignmouth in my way thither and see you Once again = it will be some atonement for the abuse I have lavished on your Native Town. Till then I will bid you farewell. My love to your Mother and Sister . . .

Believe me Your Sincere Friend
THOS. KEATS.

P.S. George has been busily occupied in preparing for his Journey, they both desire their Love — perhaps John will write = he is also very much engaged with his friends."

This letter was posted on the following Tuesday. It is the postmark which has enabled me to give its exact date.

We have observed before that Keats, on returning to London from any sojourn anywhere, was invariably "very much engaged with his friends." The effect of being again among them this time was to make the mooted Scotch tour with Brown a settled fact. The life of learning withdrawn from the world could be put off for a bit. Intimate and sensible companionship was what he needed, and something a little exciting and unusual to take his mind off the difficulties which awaited him. First of these, of course, was Tom's desperate state of health. If Tom, with the usual optimism of the consumptive, thought himself capable of recovery, and even played with the idea of a solitary journey to Italy, John, with his medical training, can scarcely have been so deceived as to his brother's real condition. That he did not realize the full gravity of the

situation seems evident, but that he could find any real hope in it cannot be believed.

The second difficulty which Keats had to meet was the parting with George. To emigrate to America, in those days, meant virtually giving up one's friends and family for life; at least, if one were neither rich enough nor idle enough to snap one's fingers at the long and expensive ocean voyage which a trip to Europe entailed. When, added to this, the goal of the journey was one of the distant settlements being established in what was at that period the far West, then indeed were the travellers cut off from any but the most meagre intercourse with Europe.

George had found his opportunity, or thought he had, in deciding to take up an allotment of land either very near, or actually a part of, a settlement just being made by a certain Morris Birkbeck. Birkbeck was a Quaker, who had travelled in America and written a book on his experiences. He was known to backwoodsmen as the "Emperor of the Prairies," because he had bought sixteen thousand acres of public land at one purchase. This land he proposed to sell in parcels to prospective farmers, and his golden dreams for the success of his undertaking were duly and enticingly set forth in another small volume, *Letters from Illinois*, published in the same year, 1818. George Keats, having succeeded in getting from Abbey as much of his share of the money due him by inheritance as was free from legal restrictions, was preparing to sink it all in this American venture. How he expected to manage when he got there, is not clear. Trained to the business of selling tea and coffee wholesale, he had no other training whatever, knew nothing of agriculture, had no knowledge of horseflesh, no experience of woodcraft, was in fact as perfectly unfitted for life in a pioneer state as could well be. He had, however, determined courage, high hopes, and Georgiana Wylie; for, with remarkable insight, or with colossal ignorance of the conditions she would be called upon to face, Mrs. Wylie had

consented to an immediate marriage between her sixteen-year-old daughter and George, just turned twenty-one, and the prompt departure of the young couple for their distant bourne. That Georgiana Wylie should be willing to go and her mother to let her, was a matter of the utmost astonishment to the Keats circle. Mrs. Reynolds took no pains to conceal her surprise at such extraordinary imprudence. Many years later, George Keats, referring to this, wrote to Dilke:[1]

> "Altogether we have been as happy as mortals usually are, had Mrs. Wylie been as wise as Mrs. R[eynolds] she would have crushed in the bud a reasonable portion of human happiness, and there would not have been any little Keatses."

Dilke was the only one of his friends who thought George's American scheme right and proper, but George had abundant support from John, who backed him up to the last inch.

The marriage took place at the end of May. On May twenty-eighth, if we can take Keats literally when, writing to the Miss Jeffreys on June fourth, he says: "George took unto himself a Wife a Week ago."

The weeks preceding the wedding were hard ones for Keats. He was ill, as a recently discovered note proves, and it seems more than likely that the illness, of which we know so well the cause, was another sore throat. The note,[2] which is postmarked "2 o'Clock. 6 JN." is short and to the point:

> "My dear Severn,
>
> The Doctor says I mustn't go out. I wish such a delicious fate would put me in cue to entertain you with a Sonnet or a Poem. I am,
>
> Yours ever
> John Keats."

[1] Original letter in Author's Collection.
[2] Owned by Mrs. Roland Gage Hopkins of Brookline, Mass.

It did not need illness to depress him, however, George's going was enough. George's project, as detailed by John to Bailey, seems madder than ever. George, he says, has been out of employ for some time, and he has now decided "to emigrate to the back Settlements of America, become Farmer and work with his own hands, after purchasing 14 hundred Acres of the American Government." This enterprising and supremely ridiculous plan has, Keats goes on, his "entire Consent." Indeed Keats "would sooner he should till the ground than bow to a customer. There is no choice with him: he could not bring himself to the latter."

Here is the old nonsensical "pride" of the year before cropping up again. Poor George, he paid dearly for it in the end. But no matter for that now. What is important to us is the effect of his decision upon Keats. "I am now so depressed that I have not an idea to put to paper," the letter continues, "my hand feels like lead." Taking up the letter again a few days later, we see him in the same state of mind:

> "I have but a confused idea of what I should be about . . . I am in that temper that if I were under water I would scarcely kick to come up to the top — I know very well 'tis all nonsense. In a short time I hope I shall be in a temper to feel sensibly your mention of my book. In vain I have waited till Monday to have any Interest in that, or anything else. I feel no spur at my Brother's going to America, and am almost stony-hearted about his wedding."

Buxton Forman considers that this letter, the two parts of which are dated simply "Thursday," and "Monday," was written on May twenty-eighth and June first. But I own the holograph, and there is nothing on it to indicate the days of the month. It is quite evident, however, that the letter was written before George's wedding, and, in view of what Keats says of the date of that event in the letter of June fourth to the Jeffreys, I am certain that this

letter to Bailey was written on May twenty-first and May twenty-fifth.

Keats seems always to have been most generous and loyal in regard to the marriages of the people he loved. No selfish thought of himself and the loss he may sustain by such a change in conditions ever appears to have entered his head. I would not belittle the tolerant sympathy he showed on such occasions, but still I believe it to be a fact that, until his own time came, he had not the slightest inkling of the complete absorption of a man in love, the host of interests that engross a newly married man which no bachelor friend can possibly share. The few young couples whom he knew at this period had all been married long enough to be able to pay attention to other things besides the marvel of a dual existence, and Keats made friends with them as they were. As time went on, however, he grew to cling more and more to those of his friends who were still single, and even to comment a little wistfully upon the breaking up of his old set. In George's case, he simply had no idea that marriage could bring about any change in their relations. We know that he admired his sister-in-law; in this very letter to Bailey, he describes her as "of a nature liberal and high-spirited enough to follow him [George] to the banks of the Mississippi," and two weeks later, to the same correspondent, he enlarges upon the theme:

> "I had known my sister-in-law some time before she was my sister, and was very fond of her. I like her better and better. She is the most disinterested woman I ever knew — that is to say, she goes beyond degree in it. To see an entirely disinterested girl quite happy is the most pleasant and extraordinary thing in the world."

Georgiana Wylie being the woman she was, there can be no doubt that if she and George had remained in England things would have gone very differently with John.

Both materially and spiritually he would have had a stay which he sorely needed. Their going to America was a greater blow than he realized, although he realized it badly enough.

Keats's numbness and stony-heartedness was Nature protecting herself from what must otherwise have been an avalanche of emotion and revolt. But the numbness could not last, the protection was bound to break down, and by the tenth of June his barriers had all given way and he was overwhelmed. Again it is to Bailey that he opens his heart, and just because he believed Bailey to be so much more stable a character than himself. "You have all your life (I think so) believed everybody," he cries out in his misery, "I have suspected everybody." He rejoices that there is such a thing as death, and says he places his "ultimate in the glory of dying for a great human purpose." But his agony is upon him and will no longer be gainsaid:

> "I have two brothers; one is driven, by the 'burden of Society,' to America; the other with an exquisite love of life, is in a lingering state. My love for my Brothers, from the early loss of our parents, and even from earlier misfortunes, has grown into an affection 'passing the love of women.' I have been ill-tempered with them — I have vexed them — but the thought of them has always stifled the impression that any woman might otherwise have made upon me. I have a sister too, and may not follow them either to America or to the grave."

This is no mere despondence; the stark simplicity of the words has the chill ruthlessness of fact. It was all true, and worse even than he could foresee. The courage with which he dares look and express is admirable; and the poet in him, tortured and broken though he was, held true to his dedication, for the paragraph ends:

> "Life must be undergone, and I certainly derive some consolation from the thought of writing one or two more poems before it ceases."

Although the Scotch tour was a settled thing, Keats was not quite happy in his mind about it. We see this from his telling Bailey that he is not certain whether he shall be able to go on any journey "on account of my Brother Tom, and a little indisposition of my own."

It was certainly a very questionable proceeding to leave Tom alone in Hampstead, and Keats must have had a good deal of trouble in squaring his going with his conscience. But before we condemn him for his final decision, we must take into due consideration his morbid state, and think soberly of what the effect of his staying under the circumstances would have been on Tom. If he had been well and in good spirits, able in all respects to cheer Tom up and care for him, then certainly he should have stayed. But he was not well, and his spirits were at the lowest ebb. The chances are that, reasoning from the facts as he saw them, he did the wise thing in regard to Tom by going; for we must remember that he had no idea how ill Tom really was, and firmly believed that he himself should return from his trip quite rested and refreshed, and much better able to look after Tom during the Winter. Besides, Mrs. Bentley was a most reliable woman, the Dilkes were close by, and Haslam, Severn, Wells, and other good friends, were sure to keep Tom from feeling lonely. Severn and Haslam had been invited to be of the walking party, but had refused, Severn on account of lack of cash, Haslam probably for business reasons. Of course, Keats's decision to tramp about Scotland for two months was, as regards his own health, a ghastly blunder; but neither he nor the family doctor, Mr. Sawrey, had apparently the faintest conception that his "indisposition" had any underlying cause. He had a mere passing sore throat, that was all. In accepting Brown's invitation, Keats signed his doom, but he could not know that; and, indeed, with the general ignorance in regard to tuberculosis at the time, it is extremely doubtful whether the disease could have been stayed in any case.

Certain minor vexations also made Keats wish to get away. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review* had just published fresh attacks on Hunt. In *Blackwood's*, Keats was lugged in under the outrageous soubriquet of "the amiable Mister Keats." The *Quarterly* article purported to be a review of Hunt's recently published *Foliage*. In this paper, Keats was not specifically mentioned, but both he and Shelley were covertly referred to. Keats remarks on the subject: "I have more than a laurel from the Quarterly Reviewers for they have smothered me in 'Foliage.'" That is all he has to say of the matter. These were flea-bites to his real sorrows, although he might have guessed that more was to come. Perhaps he did, but other thoughts pressed, and he was in no temper to dwell on possible complications of a literary kind. Then, too, Bailey had done a nice thing. He had written a very complimentary review of *Endymion* in the *Oxford Herald*. Keats was pleased, of course, but both too much preoccupied, and too wise in the knowledge that public praise from a friend often brings out violent refutations from enemies, to be much elated. He knew very well that the Edinburgh reviewers were merely biding their time.

The month after George's wedding was passed by Keats in as nearly normal a manner as he could compass. Tom seemed to be improving, and he and John acquired a habit of sitting on a bench opposite their lodgings at Well Walk, an occupation which reminded them of the Den at Teignmouth, where, by the same token, they were heartily glad not to be. One little glimpse of the newly married couple we have in an unpublished note[1] to Taylor from George sent from 29 Brunswick Square, where presumably they lodged after the wedding. In a postscript to the note, which is to thank Taylor for letters of introduction for America, George says:

[1] Author's Collection.

"Reynolds will be with me this Evening can you come, I think John likewise, you must see Mrs. Keats since you are physognomick and discover if the lines of her face answer to her spirit."

Half-past eleven on Monday morning, June twenty-second, saw George and his wife, Keats, and Brown, getting into, or mounting to the top of, the "Prince Saxe Cobourg" Liverpool coach, bound through Stony-Stratford, Lichfield, and the Potteries, and due to arrive at its destination in thirty-two hours precisely.

It was a bright, warm morning, with Midsummer Day a bare twelve hours gone by. We can fancy the spirits of the party. George elated; Georgiana excited, delighted, but a little tearful; John resolutely forgetting the approaching separation and forcing his mind to the pleasures of the coming trip, which, in the exhilaration of sunny air, swift motion, and constantly changing scene, became momently less difficult; Brown thoroughly cheerful and happy and full of amusing anecdote. The coach stopped at Redbourne for dinner, and there was Keats's old friend, Henry Stephens, having been advised by Keats of their coming, awaiting them in the porch of the Black Bull Inn.

Stephens was now in practice at Redbourne, and he and Keats had seen little or nothing of each other for nearly two years, but Keats had preserved a kindly recollection of him and was most anxious to introduce him to his new sister-in-law. Stephens, years afterwards, recorded his impression of her as he remembered it:

[1] "Rather short, not what might be called strictly handsome, but looked like a being whom any man of moderate sensibility might easily love. She had the imaginative poetical cast. Somewhat singular and girlish in her attire . . . There was something original about her, and John seemed to regard her as a being whom he delighted to honour, and introduced her with evident satisfaction."

[1] Colvin.

All too soon for the chattering party, the guard blew his horn to warn all and sundry that time was up, and the travellers hurried out of the inn and started off once more on the long journey to Liverpool. Thirty-two hours of steady coaching was no joke, but these were all very young people, determined to find everything quite perfect that came in their way. And the sun did not set until after eight, with the long, lingering Midsummer twilight to follow. The moon was a waning one, not making its appearance until near midnight, but Jupiter was especially bright that year. Perhaps they went inside the coach, but I do not believe it; I believe these four gay young people (and we can suppose John the gayest of all by intention) rode all the way high on the top, and saw everything there was to be seen, and slept very little and very uncomfortably, which they would not admit, and found the second day as much to their liking as the first, until punctually at half-past seven o'clock on Tuesday evening the coach deposited them, a rather weary group, at the door of the Crown Inn in Liverpool. I imagine John going to bed, with his good spirits somewhat evaporated as the thought of the inevitable parting, now so near, obtruded itself, but with the serviceable Brown luckily on hand to keep the blue devils from engulfing him. After all, he was very tired, and Scotland was still ahead.

In those days, people did not book passages in London for a certain ship sailing at a certain hour on a certain day, and arrive at the port of embarkation just in time to step on board. Sailing ships were at the mercy of winds, tides, and various other circumstances. What people bound on a voyage did, whether they secured their accommodations ahead or not, was to travel to the place whence a ship would sail some time and wait until it did. Accordingly, when the George Keatses would sail was extremely problematical; and it had never been intended that Keats and Brown should wait and see them off. Brown, we may

be sure, was anxious to begin the walking part of the tour, and Keats would certainly have had too much sense to prolong a leave-taking which was so difficult and painful. The plunge into the future must be taken, and Keats plunged, with all the force of his character helping him on. It would have been wiser to rest a day after the long coach journey from London, but Keats, knowing his own mental condition, deemed otherwise. From Liverpool to Lancaster would be dull walking, it was therefore decided to begin the tour proper from that place.

Coaches to Lancaster left the Crown Inn at almost any hour, and taking one of the earliest of these, so early, in fact, that George was not up when they departed, the young men were whirled away from Liverpool, with its eternal rumbling drays, and forests of masts, and its atmosphere of salt and tar and the far-reaching contacts of trade. Keats had no idea when he should meet his brother and sister-in-law again. George he did see, two years later; but, with Georgiana, the parting at Liverpool was final. By the time she was able to return to England, Keats was dead. Probably no natural law is more merciful to man than that which prevents his seeing beyond the present. Blue, Keats certainly was, when the coach-wheels started to turn, but not so blue as to expect from fate any such bitter luck as this. In fact, the bridge of separation once crossed, his spirits, as is usual when one is young and events are interesting, began to rise. His letters during the early part of his trip show him in much better cue than for a long time previously.

Lancaster, when they reached it, offered the two eager young men no welcome at all. The town was all in a clatter over a coming election. In 1818, Lord Brougham undertook to contest the hitherto unchallenged supremacy of the great Lowther family by offering himself as Whig candidate for parliament for the county of Westmoreland. Such a state of things was unheard of, and the Tory party bristled

with rage and unwonted energy, doing all in their power to frustrate such an evil design. The Whigs, no whit behind their opponents in activity, were out in force, and the combination of so much righteous fire and indignation on both sides filled the town with an inconceivable amount of noise and bustle. The inns were full to overflowing. "Not a bed to be had," was the invariable answer which the travellers received. At last one of them relented to the extent of promising dinner, a meal for which Keats and Brown had to wait two hours. The problem of where to pass the night was finally solved by discovering a private house willing to take them in.

Here was an uncomfortable beginning indeed, but to Keats and Brown it was no beginning at all, merely a prolongation of the prologue. The beginning would be next day, and by sunrise they were ready for it. Four o'clock in the morning of Thursday, June twenty-fifth, found them dressed, knapsacks packed, but — it rained, rained cats and dogs. Being new to the weather, they set themselves to wait, whiling away the time with a volume of Milton which Brown had brought along. Keats's contribution to their joint library was the miniature *Dante* in three volumes, translated by the Reverend H. F. Cary, and "printed for the author" by J. Barfield, in 1814. These were the only books they had. But they had abundance of another requisite, each was well provided with pens, ink, and paper, and, for the rest, a change or two of socks, shirts, and handkerchiefs. That was as much as the knapsacks would hold or they could carry. The fact that they had no duplicate outer garments left them badly at the mercy of the elements, an inconvenience they had not considered.

Since the house where they lodged had not included food in its bargain, breakfast must be walked for. It was therefore eminently satisfactory when, at seven o'clock, the rain lightened to a Scotch mist. This was sufficient encourage-

ment to make them hurriedly strap on their knapsacks and set out. The trip was actually begun at last.

Four miles brought the pedestrians to Bolton-le-Sands, where they succeeded in getting breakfast, and the mist clearing away at noon, they had a pleasant afternoon's walk, which included their first real view. By the time they reached Burton-in-Kendal, the thought of dinner was by no means disagreeable, but Burton was no better able to accommodate them than Lancaster had been the day before. The landlord of the Green Dragon refused them, not only food, but even a room to sit in. His house was full of soldiers, he said, and he could give them nothing. The landlady of the King's Arms was in no better case, but of a kindlier disposition. Her loquacity made her at least more human. [1] "Ah, gentlemen!" she wailed, "the soldiers are upon us. The Lowthers had brought 'em here to be in readiness . . . Dear me, dear me! at this election time to have soldiers upon us, when we ought to be making a bit of money. Not to be able to entertain anybody. There was yesterday, I was forced to turn away two parties in their own carriages; for I have not a room to offer, nor a bed for any one. You can't sleep here, gentlemen, but I can give you a dinner." The sorely-burdened soul was as good as her word, for dinner they did get, but out they had to go after it in search of a lodging. They tried a public-house by the roadside with no sort of success, and as by this time the rain had come on again, things did not look very cheerful. At length, however, they found accommodation, such as it was, in a miserable little den of an inn in the village of End Moor.

Walking trips were very far from being the fashion in the early nineteenth century. The sight of two young men with knapsacks on their backs suggested pedlars to the

[1] From *Walks in the North during the Summer of 1818*, by Charles Armitage Brown. Published in the *Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal* in 1840. Day Collection.

rural mind, and here, at End Moor, a drunken old labourer made a clutch at Brown's knapsack, at the same time asking if he sold razors or spectacles.

The next day, Friday, took them through Kendal and beyond to a fine nine mile stretch on the way to Lake Windermere. This walk Brown describes in characteristic vein as follows:

> [1]"The country was wild and romantic, the weather fine, though not sunny, while the fresh mountain air, and many larks about us, gave us unbounded delight. As we approached the lake, the scenery became more and more grand and beautiful, and from time to time we stayed our steps, gazing intently on it. Hitherto, Keats had witnessed nothing superior to Devonshire; but beautiful as that is, he was now tempted to speak of it with indifference. At the first turn from the road, before descending to the hamlet of Bowness, we both simultaneously came to a full stop. The lake lay before us. His bright eyes darted on a mountain-peak, beneath which was gently floating on a silver cloud; thence to a very small island, adorned with the foliage of trees, that lay beneath us, and surrounded by water of a glorious hue, when he exclaimed: 'How can I believe in that? Surely it cannot be!' He warmly asserted that no view in the world could equal this, that it must beat all Italy; yet having moved onward but a hundred yards, catching the further extremity of the lake, he thought it 'more and more wonderfully beautiful.' The trees far and near, the grass immediately around us, the fern and furze in their most luxuriant growth, all added to the charm. Not a mist, but an imperceptible vapour bestowed a mellow, softened tint over the immense mountains on the opposite side, and at the further end of the lake."

Before we smile at Brown's "immense mountains" and Keats's conviction that this view of Lake Windermere must "beat all Italy," let us remember that Brown had hitherto seen nothing grander in the way of scenery than

[1] From Brown's published account.

Wales could offer, and that Keats's experience of the picturesque was limited to the Isle of Wight and the country-side about Teignmouth. To these two extremely untravelled young men, the charming views which the lake country constantly reveals, views which remind an American so strongly of bits of New Hampshire, were of an unparalleled magnificence. Such eye-peeps were tonic to Keats. He walked on air, and drank in what he saw in great gulps of joyous appreciation.

Arriving at Bowness, the travellers found an excellent and up-to-date inn, well furnished, and perfectly equipped for every event. The first thing they did was to row out on the lake and dip up some preserved trout for dinner; the next, was to have a good bath in the lake; and the last, to sit themselves down in the inn dining-room and dispatch the trout.

It is amusing to note that, in their enthusiasm for the simple life, they found the sophistication of the Bowness inn anything but admirable. Brown says:

> [1] "... we thought the many luxuries, together with the cold, civil, professional formality attending them, but ill accorded with the view from the window; nay, the curtains, furnished by some gay upholsterer, about that very window, might almost be construed into something like an affront."

After dinner, they once more took to the road, walking the six miles to Ambleside in a perfect trance of delight. Brown is most eloquent about this walk, but a single one of his many descriptions must serve us here. It is less garish than is usual with him, and for that very reason telling enough to produce an atmosphere. In it, we have the very spirit of the afternoon:

> "The wind had become fresh, waving the foliage and rippling the water, — the sound of which, together with the singing of the birds was perfect."

[1] From Brown's published account.

The sun came out as they approached Ambleside, firing the still hanging clouds to curvatures of gold and purple brilliance; and so they reached Ambleside and put up for the night.

Saturday was to be a day of rest, or at least they had decided not to tramp *on* that day, merely to tramp *about*. Somewhat less early than the inconceivably early hours at which they usually began the day, these indefatigable young persons sallied forth to see the sights. But these I prefer to let Keats describe, and it so happens that a fortunate accident has put into our possession a letter containing a detailed account of these first days of the tour, and in particular of this Saturday morning at Ambleside. This letter is none other than the first of the series of long journal letters, carried on from day to day and posted at convenient intervals, which Keats wrote to Tom during this Summer. The history of its discovery is among the curious happenings of literary fortune. Mr. Ralph Leslie Rusk, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Indiana, has lately been engaged upon a book on the literature of the Middle-Western frontiers. The course of his researches led him to the newspapers published in the frontier towns of the period, and among others consulted was the *Western Messenger*, published in Louisville, Kentucky. Going through the files of this paper, under the date of June, 1836, Professor Rusk suddenly stumbled upon a communication from George Keats, which proved on examination to be a letter from the poet to his brother Tom. The opening of the letter was not given, but otherwise it appeared to have been copied in full. That there must have been such a letter, was evident from the farther correspondence, but it had been supposed to be lost, as probably the original is by now, yet for nearly ninety years this faithful copy of it had slumbered unmolested where no one had had the wit to look for it. Professor Rusk realized instantly what he had found, and transcribed the letter in

full, and then, with admirable generosity, permitted it to be printed in the *North American Review* with a few most interesting comments by himself.

The value of Professor Rusk's discovery is greatly enhanced by the supreme importance of the letter itself. For it ranks as one of the best of the Scotch letters, and certainly the one in which Keats's power of prose description is most in evidence. It was begun on the evening of the first day's walk, continued at Bowness on the following day, and finished at Ambleside after breakfast on Saturday. I print it here by permission of Professor Rusk and the editor of the *North American Review*.

[1] "Here beginneth my journal, this Thursday, the 25th day of June, Anno Domini 1818. This morning we arose at 4, and set off in a Scotch mist; put up once under a tree, and in fine, have walked wet and dry to this place, called in the vulgar tongue Endmoor, 17 miles; we have not been incommoded by our knapsacks; they serve capitally, and we shall go on very well.

June 26 — I merely put *pro forma*, for there is no such thing as time and space, which by the way came forcibly upon me on seeing for the first hour the Lake and Mountains of Winander — I cannot describe them — they surpass my expectation — beautiful water — shores and islands green to the marge — mountains all round up to the clouds. We set out from Endmoor this morning, breakfasted at Kendal with a soldier who had been in all the wars for the last seventeen years — then we have walked to Bowne's [Bowness] to dinner — said Bowne's situated on the Lake where we have just dined, and I am writing at this present. I took an oar to one of the islands to take up some trout for our dinner, which they keep in porous boxes. I enquired of the waiter for Wordsworth — he said he knew him, and that he had been here a few days ago, canvassing for the Lowthers. What think you of that — Wordsworth versus Brougham!! Sad — sad — sad — and yet the family has been his friend always. What can

[1] Quoted from the *North American Review*, March, 1924.

we say? We are now about seven miles from Rydale, and expect to see him to-morrow. You shall hear all about our visit.

There are many disfigurements to this Lake — not in the way of land or Water. No; the two views we have had of it are of the most noble tenderness — they can never fade away — they make one forget the divisions of life; age, youth, poverty and riches; and refine one's sensual vision into a sort of north star which can never cease to be open lidded and stedfast over the wonders of the great Power. The disfigurement I mean is the miasma of London. I do suppose it contaminated with bucks and soldiers, and women of fashion — and hat-band ignorance. The border inhabitants are quite out of keeping with the romance about them, from a continual intercourse with London rank and fashion. But why should I grumble? They let me have a prime glass of soda water — O they are as good as their neighbours. But Lord Wordsworth, instead of being in retirement, has himself and his house full in the thick of fashionable visitors quite convenient to be pointed at all the summer long. When we had gone about half this morning, we began to get among the hills and to see the mountains grow up before us — the other half brought us to Wynandermere, 14 miles to dinner. The weather is capital for the views, but is now rather misty, and we are in doubt whether to walk to Ambleside to tea — it is five miles along the borders of the Lake. Loughrigg will swell up before us all the way — I have an amazing partiality for mountains in the clouds. There is nothing in Devon like this, and Brown says there is nothing in Wales to be compared to it. I must tell you, that in going through Cheshire and Lancaster, I saw the Welsh mountains at a distance. We have passed the two castles, Lancaster and Kendal.

27th — We walked here to Ambleside yesterday along the border of Winandermere all beautiful with wooded shores and Islands — our road was a winding lane, wooded on each side, and green overhead, full of Foxgloves — every now and then a glimpse of the Lake, and all the while Kirkstone and other large hills nestled together in a sort of grey

black mist. Ambleside is at the northern extremity of the Lake. We arose this morning at six, because we call it a day of rest, having to call on Wordsworth who lives only two miles hence — before breakfast we went to see the Ambleside waterfall. The morning beautiful — the walk early among the hills. We, I may say, fortunately, missed the direct path, and after wandering a little, found it out by the noise — for, mark you, it is buried in trees, in the bottom of the valley — the stream itself is interesting throughout with 'mazy error over pendant shades.' Milton meant a smooth river — this is buffetting all the way on a rocky bed ever various — but the waterfall itself, which I came suddenly upon, gave me a pleasant twinge. First we stood a little below the head about half way down the first fall, buried deep in trees, and saw it streaming down two more descents to the depth of near fifty feet — then we went on a jut of rock nearly level with the tsecond [sic] fall-head, where the first fall was above us, and the third below our feet still — at the same time we saw that the water was divided by a sort of cataract island on whose other side burst out a glorious stream — then the thunder and the freshness. At the same time the different falls have as different characters; the first darting down the slate rock like an arrow; the second spreading out like a fan — the third dashed into a mist — and the one on the other side of the rock a sort of mixture of all these. We afterwards moved away a space, and saw nearly the whole more mild, streaming silverly through the trees. What astonishes me more than anything is the tone, the colouring, the slate, the stone, the moss, the rock-weed; or, if I may so say, the intellect, the countenance of such places. The space, the magnitude of mountains and waterfalls are well imagined before one sees them; but this countenance or intellectual tone must surpass every imagination and defy any remembrance. I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever, for the abstract endeavour of being able to add a mite to that mass of beauty which is harvested from these grand materials, by the finest spirits, and put into ethereal existence for the relish of one's fellows. I cannot think with Hazlitt that these scenes make man appear little.

I never forgot my stature so completely — I live in the eye; and my imagination, surpassed, is at rest — We shall see another water-fall near Kydal [Rydal] to which we shall proceed after having put these letters in the post office. I long to be at Carlisle, as I expect there a letter from George and one from you. Let any of my friends see my letters — they may not be interested in descriptions — descriptions are bad at all times — I did not intend to give you any; but how can I help it? I am anxious you should taste a little of our pleasure; it may not be an unpleasant thing, as you have not the fatigue. I am well in health. Direct henceforth to Post Patrick [Port Patrick] till the 12th July. Content that probably three or four pairs of eyes whose owners I am rather partial to will run over these lines I remain; and moreover that I am your affectionate brother JOHN."

In his comment on the letter, Professor Rusk opens up an engaging problem. The passage in which he does so, I will quote:

"In its relation to the poems of Keats, this part of his journal is rivalled in significance by only a few of his other letters. One must be struck especially by the remarkable passage which is perhaps reminiscent of the opening lines of *Endymion* and is certainly suggestive of both the thought and the imagery of the 'Bright Star' sonnet: the views he and Brown had had of Windermere were 'of the most noble tenderness — they can never fade away — they make one forget the divisions of life; age, youth, poverty and riches; and refine one's sensual vision into a sort of north star which can never cease to be open lidded and steadfast over the wonders of the great Power.' Though the resemblance between this passage and *Endymion*, certainly more a matter of thought than of words, is possibly only fanciful, something more must be said for its relation to Keats's 'last' sonnet."

It has been known for some time that the so-called "last" sonnet was by no means such, having been written in 1819.

Professor Rusk suggests that it may have been written even earlier, possibly, indeed, when Keats wrote this letter to Tom. Professor Rusk commits himself so far as to say: "The passage in the journal makes it extremely likely that at least the first part of the famous sonnet was already in Keats's mind when he explored the shores of Windermere on June 26, 1818." This is ingenious reasoning, but leaves out the witness of psychology, for a close study of Keats's state of mind at the time shows him as quite out of the mood in which the sonnet was written. What his mood at the moment was, Professor Rusk had not adequate means of knowing, but we may clearly see. For a hitherto unpublished letter to George contains two poems, one written that same evening, the other on the following day, and both are as unlike in tone to the sonnet as could be imagined. I do believe, however, with Professor Rusk, that this letter has a close connection with the "last" sonnet; but what this connection is, I shall wait until we reach the time when I feel sure it was written to consider. At the end of Professor Rusk's article is a bit of criticism so trenchant and true, so exactly in accordance with the facts, that I wish to set it down here, in his words. Referring to Keats's sentence: "I shall learn poetry here and shall henceforth write more than ever," Professor Rusk adds: "Here, for once, he realized his desire to forget his own harassing personality and live in the eye alone."

It should be pointed out that Keats did not mean that he should write more poetry "here," but that the beautiful and imposing scenes he was witnessing would in themselves teach him much about poetry, and from the memory of them stored away in his brain poetry was sure to come. His remark: "My imagination, surpassed, is at rest" must be noted. It is a touchstone to the creative temperament.

The letter to Tom breaks off with the early morning's adventures; for those of the rest of the day, I shall again let Keats be his own spokesman. At the moment, it is

sufficient to say that after taking in all that the locality had to offer, the travellers determined to get on a little, and did so by proceeding to Wytheburn, a little village at the foot of Helvellyn, which they hoped to climb the next morning. Here Keats wrote what seems to have been his second letter. This second letter[1] has never before been printed, so far as I know, I therefore give it entire. It is addressed to "Mr. George Keats. Crown Inn. Liverpool," and is postmarked "Keswick" and "Liverpool." But George had sailed before the letter arrived, and it was returned to John, who has endorsed it "To be sent to George."

"Foot of Helvellyn June 27.

My dear George:

We have passed from Lancaster to Burton from Burton to Enmoor, from Enmoor to Kendal from Kendal to Bownes. On turning down to which place there burst upon us the most beautiful and rich view of Winanda mere and the surrounding Mountains — we dined at Bownes on Trout which I took an oar to fetch from some Box preserves close on one of the little green Islands. After dinner we walked to Ambleside down a beautiful shady Lane along the Borders of the Lake with ample opportunity for Glimpses all the way. We slept at Ambleside not above two miles from Rydal the Residence of Wordsworth. We arose not very early on account of having marked this day for a day of rest. Before breakfast we visited the first waterfall I ever saw and certainly small as it is it surpassed my expectation, in what I have mentioned in my letter to Tom, in its tone and intellect its light and shade slaty Rock, Moss and Rock weed — but you will see finer ones I will not describe by comparison a teapot spout. We eat a Monstrous Breakfast on our return (which by the way I do every morning) and after it proceeded to Wordsworth's. He was not at home nor was any Member of his family. I was much disappointed. I wrote a note for him and stuck it up over what I knew must be Miss Wordsworth's Portrait,

[1] Author's Collection.

and set forth again and we visited two Waterfalls in the neighbourhood, and then went along by Rydal Water and Grassmere through its beautiful Vale — then through a defile in the Mountains into Cumberland and so to the foot of Helvellyn whose summit is out of sight four Miles off rise above rise. I have seen Kirkstone, Loughrigg and Silver How — and discovered without a hint 'that ancient woman seated on Helm Craig.' This is the summary of what I have written to Tom and dispatched from Ambleside. I have had a great confidence in your being well able to support the fatigues of your Journey since I have felt how much new Objects contribute to keep off a sense of Ennui and fatigue. 14 miles here is not so much as the 4 from Hampstead to London. You will have an inexhaustible astonishment; with that and such a Companion you will be cheered on from day to day. I hope you will not have sail'd before this Letter reaches you — yet I do not know for I will have my series to Tom copied and sent to you by the first Packet you have from England. God send you both as good Health as I have now. Ha! my dear Sister George I wish I knew what humour you were in that I might accomodate myself to any one of your amiabilities. Shall it be a Sonnet or a Pun or an Acrostic, a Riddle or a Ballad — 'perhaps it may turn out a Sang, and perhaps turn out a Sermon.' I'll write you on my word the first and most likely the last I ever shall do, because it has struck me — what shall it be about.

Give me your patience Sister while I frame
Enitials verse-wise of your golden name:
Or sue the fair Apollo and he will
Rouse from his slumber heavy and instill
Great love in me for thee and Poesy.
Imagine not that greatest Mastery
And Kingdom over all the realm of verse
Nears more to Heaven in aught than when we nurse
And surety give to Love and Brotherhood.

Anthropophagi in Othello's mood,
Ulysses stormed, and his enchanted Belt

Glow with the Muse but they are never felt
Unbosom'd so, and so eternal made,
Such selfsame incense in their Laurel shade
To all the regent sisters of the Nine
As this poor offering to thee Sister mine.

Kind Sister! Aye this third name says you are
Entranced has it been the Lord knows where.
All may it taste to you like good old wine.
Take you to real Happiness and give
Sons daughters and a Home like honied hive.

June 28. I have slept and walked eight miles to Breakfast to Keswick on derwent water. We could not mount Helvellyn for the mist so gave it up with hopes of Skiddaw which we shall try tomorrow if it be fine — to day we shall walk round Derwent water, and in our Way see the Falls of Low-dore. The approach to derwent water is rich and magnificent beyond any means of conception — the Mountains all round sublime and graceful and rich in colour. Woods and wooded Islands here and there — at the same time in the distance among Mountains of another aspect we see Bassenthwaite [page torn] drop like a hawk on the Post Office at Carlisle [torn] some letters from you and Tom. . . . . .

Sweet sweet is the greeting of eyes,
And sweet is the voice in its greeting,
When Adieux have grown old and goodbyes
Fade away where old time is retreating

Warm the nerve of a welcoming hand
And earnest a Kiss on the Brow.
When we meet over sea and o'er Land
Where furrows are new to the Plough.

This is all [torn] in the [torn] please [torn] Letters as [torn] We will before many years are over have written many folio volumes which is a Matter of self-defence to one whom you understand intends to be immortal in the

best points and let all his sins and peccadillos die away. I mean to say that the Booksellers will rather decline printing ten folio volumes of Correspondence printed as close as the Apostles creed in a Watch paper. I have been looking out my dear Georgy for a joke or a Pun for you. — there is none but the Names of romantic Misses on the Inn window Panes. You will of course have given me directions Brother George where to direct on the other side of the Water. I have not had time to write to Henry [1] — for I have a journal to keep for Tom nearly enough to employ all my leisure. I am a day behind hand with him. I scarcely know how I shall manage Fanny and two or three others I have promised. We expect to be in Scotland in at most three days so you must if this should catch you before you set sail give me a line to Port-Patrick.

God Bless you my dear brother and sister,

JOHN."

John never did send this letter to George. The only part of it which crossed the ocean was the acrostic on his sister-in-law's name, "Georgiana Augusta Keats," which he copied into a letter written in the Autumn of 1819, introducing it by saying: "I wrote it in a great hurry which you will see. Indeed I would not copy it if I thought it would ever be seen by any but yourselves." The acrostic is little worse than such *tours-de-force* usually are. It was a "stunt" tossed off for fun. The other poem in this letter is an unlucky find on my part; it has never been in print before. I say unlucky, because, while the scheme of this book makes it imperative that I sedulously put in whatever verse I discover which is certainly by Keats and has not heretofore been published, regardless of its merits, this poem is so singularly poor that poetically nothing would have been lost had it remained in oblivion. Keats was quite aware of this; he did not copy it into the letter which contained the acrostic. What little interest it has, lies in the fact that it shows Keats already solacing himself with the thought of

[1] Mrs. George Keats's brother.

meeting. The past he has put definitely behind him, and he is already planning for the future. But, indeed, the whole letter is so different in tone from those sent to Bailey from Hampstead that we see quite clearly what a stabilizing effect the tramp was having upon him. He was thoroughly interested in everything he saw. The kind of country he was walking through was new to him, the life of the pedestrian tourist equally so. Even the sound, dog-tired sleeps, and the big breakfasts, were doing him good. That this early part of the tour was really productive of good, is an evidence of what an unusually strong man he was meant by nature to be; for we must never forget that already tuberculosis had begun its insidious work and such strenuous days could only have hastened its action. Keats was perfectly cognizant of the why and wherefore of his raised spirits and his pleasant sense of well-being. When, in the letter, he comments upon the fact of novelty serving to banish ennui and fatigue, for "ennui" we may read "despondence." For the time being, he was high cockalorum, and Brown was a first-rate companion to keep up his mood.

As the letter has told us, Sunday morning dawned with a Scotch mist. It had rained in the night, and not only was the going bad, but Helvellyn was all in cloud; there was no possibility of any view from it, so the travellers, comforting themselves with the thought of Skiddaw to come, tugged on to Keswick, eight long miles, to breakfast. That meal dispatched, and the weather clearing somewhat, they walked round Derwent Water and went to see the Fall of Lodore in which they were rather disappointed, finding it neither so large nor so torrential as they had expected. Keats wrote his impressions of it the next day to Tom as follows:

> "I had an easy climb among the streams, about the fragments of Rocks, and should have got I think to the summit, but unfortunately I was damped by slipping one

leg into a squashy hole. There is no great body of water, but the accompaniment is delightful; for it oozes out of a cleft in perpendicular Rocks, all fledged with ash and other beautiful trees. It is a strange thing how they got there. At the South end of the Lake the Mountains of Borrowdale are perhaps as fine as anything we have seen."

Keats, it will be observed, mentions no tree specifically but the ash. It will be remembered how, two years before, he had been intrigued by the thought of a mountain ash.[1] Here, then, he saw ash-trees and took keen note of the fact, probably harking back in his mind, as we are doing, to his early preoccupation with the species.

After dinner, Brown and Keats fagged up hill (the expression is Keats's) to the old Druid remains on the road to Penrith, which gave Keats much pleasure. These two scenes, the tree-clustered mountains over Lodore, and the broken circle of Druidical stones, were afterwards utilized by Keats in the *Ode to Psyche* and *Hyperion*. Brown's account of the day is far fuller and more florid than Keats's and, in considering this, Sir Sidney Colvin makes a very true observation. Since I can in no wise better what he says, I will quote the passage somewhat abridged:

[2] "Keats in his own letters says comparatively little about the scenery, and that quite simply and quietly, not at all with the descriptive enthusiasm of the picturesque tourist . . . Partly, no doubt, a certain instinctive reticence . . . keeps him from fluent words on the beauties that most deeply moved him: his way rather is to let them work silently in his being until at the right moment, if the right moment comes, their essence and vital power shall distil themselves for him into a phrase of poetry. Partly, also, the truth is that an intensely active, intuitive genius for nature like his hardly needs the stimulus of nature's beauties for long or at their highest power, but on a minimum of experience can summon up and multiply for itself spirit sunsets, and glories of dream lake and moun-

[1] See Vol. I, p. 217.

[2] *Life of John Keats*, by Sir Sidney Colvin.

tain, richer and more varied than the mere receptive lover of scenery can witness and register in memory during a lifetime of travel and pursuit."

I am very grateful to Sir Sidney for that passage, it contains a profound truth not at all understood by the generality of men. Keats's mind and observation worked with lightning-like rapidity. The impression was received, registered, and done with, in an instant's time. Another point to be made is that Keats belonged among the few who can receive almost as vivid impressions of scenery from verbal descriptions as they can from actual scenes. A hint to go upon and he could actually see whatever the author he happened to be reading had seen. There had to be a hint — I doubt if anybody could imagine the sea who had never beheld it in actual fact; but having seen the sea anywhere, he could imagine it everywhere. Mountains, Keats had never seen, hence his exclamation on the road to Bowness: "How can I believe in that?"; on the other hand, I think the ash-trees at Lodore appeared positively familiar.

The two young fellows were very tired that night, yet their eagerness pulled them out of bed at four the next morning to go up Skiddaw. The day seemed propitious, and as they had every hope of finding themselves at the top in sunshine, they set out with a guide. Here again I shall let Keats tell the story of the climb as he did to Tom in the letter I have already quoted:

"It promised all along to be fair, and we fagged and tugged nearly to the top, when, at half-past six, there came a Mist upon us, and shut out the view. We did not, however, lose anything by it: we were high enough without mist to see the coast of Scotland — the Irish Sea — the hills beyond Lancaster — and nearly all the large ones of Cumberland and Westmoreland, particularly Helvellyn and Scawfell. It grew colder and colder as we ascended, and we were glad, at about three parts of the way, to taste a little rum which the Guide brought with him, mixed,

> mind ye, with Mountain water. I took two glasses going and one returning. It is about six miles from where I am writing to the top. So we have walked ten miles before Breakfast to-day. We went up with two others, very good sort of fellows. All felt, on arising into the cold air, that same elevation which a cold bath gives one — I felt as if I were going to a Tournament."

That last touch is the very essence of poetry — sharp bodily and mental sensation distilled to one perfect, unexpected phrase.

The folly of a ten-mile climb up and down on empty stomachs is evident; but our two young men were not wise, they were merely enthusiastic. From this time on, we hear a good deal about fatigue in Keats's letters; Brown could stand anything, it seems. What urgent need they had to make so much haste cannot be guessed. There was, so far as we can see, no reason for all the hurry; but they might have been stung by the famous tarantula and doomed to perpetual motion from the speed with which they eternally went on. On this occasion they do seem to have remained at Keswick long enough to eat their breakfasts, and for Keats to write part of his letter to Tom, but in the afternoon they pushed on past Bassenthwaite Water to Ireby, where they came to a halt for the night.

At the inn at Ireby they found a dancing-school in full swing. A lot of lusty young peasants were romping about under the guidance of an itinerant dancing-master. Keats says: "they kickit and jumpit with metal extraordinary, and whiskit, and friskit, and toed it, and go'd it, and twirl'd it, and whirl'd it, and stamped it, and sweated it, tattooing the floor like mad." Keats delighted in it, this was something new. And these were people; the human nature belonging to the place, engaged in an activity which had nothing to do with the travellers. They were people spied on in the intimacy of pastime, and this was an experience which had been decidedly lacking to the trip so far.

Such local colouring was just what his mood needed. He was intelligent enough to wish to see more of a country than its scenery. Here is a significant passage, once more to Tom:

> "There was as fine a row of boys and girls as you ever saw; some beautiful faces, one exquisite mouth. I never felt so near the glory of Patriotism, the glory of making by any means a country happier. This is what I like better than scenery. I fear our continued moving from place to place will prevent our becoming learned in village affairs: we are creatures of Rivers, Lakes, and Mountains."

Keats had "got" the country, he needed no more of it; but he very much wanted to "get" the people. Still, of course, there was no time. Through Wigton to Carlisle they proceeded next day, and found that town, when they reached it, a very dull place. "The whole art of yawning might have been learned there," Brown declares. Most dutifully, however, they saw all there was to be seen, which did not impress them. Keats says: "The Cathedral does not appear very fine — the Castle is very ancient, and of brick . . . I will tell you anon whether the inside of the cathedral is worth looking at." Apparently it was not, for no farther information on the subject is vouchsafed Tom, who is told instead: "We have now walked 114 miles, and are merely a little tired in the thighs and a little blistered." In view of the blisters, we can suppose that it was no unwelcome news to be told that there was nothing much to see between Carlisle and Dumfries and they had better coach the thirty-eight miles between the two towns. This they accordingly did, and fairly crossed the border into Scotland on Wednesday, July first. Keats liked the country they passed through on the way not at all. His description of it is curiously effective and vivid. "I know not how it is," he writes, "the Clouds, the Sky, the Houses, all seem anti-Grecian and anti-Charlemagnish." This is

pure reaction, but it is also a reversion to type. Keats loved the idea of Southern lands, sunny, bright-coloured, gay; he also loved the age of chivalry, with knights pacing through lonely forests, and grim castles perched on crags whose battlemented walls shone crimson in the sunset, whence the glare of torches by night cheered the wayfarer in the valley below. The Scottish border offered only low hills and flat stretches, and a sort of nostalgia for his old worlds of romance beset him as he travelled through it. Brown tells us that they left "the wonders of Cumberland and Westmoreland . . . without a touch of regret." In Keats's case, the wonder had been worn bare, and his very fatigue called up his old, enchanting visions with a kind of mockery as though to tell him that no matter what he might see, and do, and admire, at bottom he was always irretrievably himself.

Reaching Dumfries in time for dinner, they sallied out in the afternoon to see Burns's tomb. That, and his feelings of the morning, gave Keats a sonnet. It is not a little interesting and important to find that this sonnet, *On Visiting the Tomb of Burns*, is in the Petrarchan form. Psychologically, we instantly see why. The South and chivalry were his early loves. Coming back to them as a tired child to his mother, he comes back to the sonnet form in which he had been accustomed to write until a few months before. Critics have pondered much upon this unexpected return to the Petrarchan mode. But does not the reason lie embedded in the passage in his letter from Dumfries to Tom in which he copies this sonnet? And, after all, what is the sonnet but an expression of his spleen.

On Thursday, the travellers visited the ruins of Lincluden College in the morning, and after that fate called a short halt. Keats's coat had sprung a leak in the seams from the rubbing of his knapsack and repairs were instantly necessary, for, as Keats wrote to his sister Fanny, "I have but one Coat to my back in these parts." So off the coat

went to the tailor's, and by the time it was returned "fortified at all points" it was too late to think of reaching Kirkcudbright that night. They therefore went no farther than the village of Dalbeattie.

For some unknown reason, it was the habit of this tarantula-bitten pair not to breakfast where they had passed the night, probably because their very early starts made the getting of breakfast a difficulty only to be overcome by extra payments, which they were loath to make. On Friday, therefore, they decided to breakfast at Auchencairn, a village eight miles from Dalbeattie. The way thither was particularly pleasant, with continuous views of mountains and sea, and this eight mile walk was a fortuitous one for Keats. Brown's account[1] of it contains this interesting passage:

> "For the most part, our track lay through corn-fields, or skirting small forests. I chatted half the way about Guy Mannering, for it happened that Keats had not then read that novel, and I enjoyed the recollection of the events as I described them in their own scenes. There was a little spot, close to our pathway, where, without a shadow of a doubt, old Meg Merrilies had often boiled her kettle, and, haply cooked a chicken. It was among fragments of rock, and brambles, and broom, and most tastefully ornamented with profusion of honeysuckle, wild roses and fox-glove, all in the very blush and fulness of blossom."

Keats had little interest in Scott's novels, we have seen how he felt about the *Antiquary*,[2] and it is characteristic of him that, of all Brown told him, what really made an impression was the character and appearance of Meg Merrilies, the gypsy. The type of landscape drove her in upon him, as it were. He could not escape her. After breakfast at Auchencairn, as he and Brown occupied a brief rest in writing letters, suddenly Brown's attention was caught by the fact that the lines of Keats's letter were not running in

[1] See Note, Vol. II, p. 17. [2] See Vol. I, p. 507.

regular prose, and on Brown's asking what he was doing, Keats told him that he was writing a ballad about Meg Merrilies for Fanny. Brown immediately demanded it to copy into his journal. This Keats permitted, at the same time protesting that the poem was "too much a trifle to be copied." [1] He copied it himself, however, in a letter which he then and there began to Tom.

It is faint praise to say that this ballad is far and away the best thing that Keats did during his Scotch tour. It is much more than this, being indeed, to my thinking, one of his very best poems. It stands unique in his work. Neither before nor after is there any such attempt at ballad form, nor any such lyrico-dramatic presentation of a character. It ranks with *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* as the sole example of a type of poetry which Keats would assuredly have tried his hand at again and again had he lived. These two pieces, entirely diverse in *genre* though they are, do, in fact, seem to prove that Keats was not only not written out at the time of his death, but that he had already found, and slightly practiced, two utterly different, but for him perfectly new, ways in which to write. They are evidences of the diversity and richness of his genius, and of his passion for experiment and the breaking out of untrodden paths. The ballad form is as old as the hills, but it was new to Keats, and this ballad is not really in an old mode. Prosodically, it follows the rules; psychologically, it is as fresh as the *Ancient Mariner*, and that was saying much in 1818. It is what we may call up-to-date, considering the period; while *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is more than this, for it is the essence and precursor of the whole pre-Raphaelite school.

Friday night saw Keats and Brown at Kirkcudbright, from which place Keats wrote into his letter of the morning to Fanny the nonsense verses *There was a naughty Boy*. Part of these verses I have already quoted.[2] On Saturday,

[1] From Brown's published account. See Note, Vol. II, p. 17.
[2] See Vol. I, p. 35.

July fourth, they seem to have gone as far as Newton Stewart, and from thence, on Sunday, the fifth, to Glenluce. Here let me say that it is a little difficult to apportion the days correctly during this part of the trip. Brown in his published account makes no divisions, and the dates of Keats's letters are extremely hard to follow, since he frequently goes on from one day to another, not only without changing the date, but without beginning a new paragraph. If Keats's date[1] in a letter to Tom can be taken as evidence, they left Glenluce on Monday, July sixth, *en route* for Stranraer, "going round to see some rivers: they were scarcely worth while." Having seen the rivers and been disappointed in them, they were proceeding on their way in a burning sun, "when" says Keats, "the Mail overtook us: we got up, and were at Port Patrick in a jiffey." At Port Patrick they crossed immediately in the packet to Donaghadee. From an old diary of my grandfather's, who took somewhat the same trip as Keats a year later, in 1819, I learn that the crossing was accomplished in four hours. But that was on a rough day. How long it took Keats, we have no means of knowing, but the passage was made pleasant to him by hearing two old men sing ballads. At Donaghadee, they stopped for the night, and were gratified to hear that the Giant's Causeway, to see which they had come to Ireland, was only forty-eight miles distant; they had feared it seventy.

At first glance, there seemed to be considerable to be said in favour of Ireland over Scotland. Keats's opinion on the subject, sent to Tom, is interesting and, although admittedly superficial, contains more than a grain of truth:

[2] "I can perceive a great difference in the nations, from

[1] In the letter as published, the date of writing is given as July sixth; but in the holograph in the possession of James Freeman Clarke, Esq. of Boston, it is very clearly written "July 7." Immediately after this date, Keats says: "Yesterday morning we set out from Glen Luce."

[2] Copied from the original letter in the possession of James Freeman Clarke, Esq. of Boston, Mass. to whose grandfather it was given by George Keats.

the chambermaid at this *nate tun* kept by Mr. Kelley. She is fair, kind, and ready to laugh, because she is out of the horrible dominion of the Scotch Kirk. A Scotch girl stands in terrible awe of the Elders — poor little Susannah's, they will scarcely laugh, they are greatly to be pitied, and the Kirk is greatly to be damned. These Kirk-men have done Scotland good.[1] They have made old men, young men; old women, young women; boys, girls and infants all careful — so they are formed into regular Phalanges of savers and gainers. Such a thrifty army cannot fail to enrich their Country, and give it a greater appearance of Comfort than that of their poor Irish neighbours. These Kirk-men have done Scotland harm; they have banished puns, and laughing, and kissing, &c. (except in cases where the very danger and crime must make it very fine and gustful.) I shall make a full stop at kissing, for after that there should be a better parenthesis, and go on to remind you of the fate of Burns — poor unfortunate fellow, his disposition was Southern — how sad it is when a luxurious imagination is obliged, in self-defence, to deaden its delicacy in vulgarity and riot in things attainable, that it may not have leisure to go mad after things that are not. No man, in such matters, will be content with the experience of others. It is true that but of sufferance there is no greatness, no dignity, that in the most abstracted pleasure there is no lasting happiness. Yet who would not like to discover over again that Cleopatra was a Gipsy, Helen a rogue, and Ruth a deep one? . . . We live in a barbarous age — I would sooner be a wild deer, than a girl under the dominion of the Kirk; and I would sooner be a wild hog, than be the occasion of a poor Creature's penance before those execrable elders."

The theory of the baneful effect of inhibitions had not been heard of when Keats wrote that passage, and yet how clearly and succinctly he has summed it up! His understanding of Burns's case is, considering the period, simply extraordinary. Nowhere better than in this passage do we

[1] So in the original; probably Keats omitted "no" by mistake, or else intended to put a question mark at the end of the sentence.

have an insight into Keats's essentially modern mind. People before Keats's day had advocated lust and license, but who else at the time had indicated any possibly valid reasons for them. In those days, lust was lust and license license; who advocated them did so because he was willing to snap his fingers at the devil and make hay while the sun shone. But Keats, while not advocating, condones with a reason, a pitiful reason which our age alone has ever comprehended.

The next day, Tuesday, the travellers set out for Belfast, a twenty-two mile walk, during which Keats saw enough of the state of the country to disillusion him not a little. He was struck with the "worse than nakedness, the rags, the dirt and misery of the poor common Irish." "A Scotch cottage," he exclaims, "is a palace to an Irish one." The young men floundered through a Peat-bog "three miles long at least — dreary, black, dank, flat and spongy" and saw "poor dirty Creatures and a few strong men cutting or carting peat." And he cries "What a tremendous difficulty is the improvement of the condition of such people. I cannot conceive how a mind '*with child*' of philanthropy could grasp at [the] possibility."

At Belfast, Keats and Brown discovered that the forty-eight miles were Irish ones, equalling seventy English miles, and this capped the climax of their disgust. They also found that prices at Irish inns were about three times those of Scotland. All this was too much, and back they footed it next day to Donaghadee. On their return walk, they encountered an old hag smoking a pipe, being carried along in what Keats calls "the worst dog-kennel you ever saw" by a couple of ragged girls. Keats, who observed everything, describes her as "looking out with a round-eyed, skinny-lidded inanity; with a sort of horizontal idiotic movement of the head."

Reaching Donaghadee, they took the daily packet for Port Patrick, and there passed the night of Wednesday,

July eighth. Keats, who had been disappointed in receiving no letters on his arrival at Port Patrick two days before, repaired to the Post Office again, and we can imagine his feelings — he who hated soldiers — when the postmaster snapped out "What regiment?"

The two friends, not too well pleased with their experiences, left Port Patrick, it would seem, on July ninth, and repaired to Stranraer, and from thence to Cairn and Ballantrae. The road from Cairn gave them much pleasure, and both Keats and Brown wax eloquent about it. Finally, on climbing up a considerable ascent, they caught sight of Ailsa Rock fifteen miles out to sea. This great mass of stone, heaved up out of the waves to a grim and solitary grandeur, greatly moved Keats. He tells Tom:

> "The effect of Ailsa with the peculiar perspective of the Sea in connection with the ground we stood on, and the misty rain then falling gave me a complete Idea of a deluge. Ailsa struck me very suddenly — really I was a little alarmed."

The first sentence of that passage is excessively interesting, for Keats sees with the vision of a painter, but of no painter of his time. It is no early nineteenth century European picture that he gives us here, but a Japanese colour print. Even the suggestion of perspective does not mar the effect, which is, I think, given by his speaking of the misty rain falling between him and the Rock and sea. In colour and form the scene is absolutely Japanese. Any one who is familiar with Hiroshige's *Night Rain at Karaski*, one of the *Eight Views of Lake Biwa*, with its veil of dropping rain half obscuring a gigantic pine-tree, will understand what I mean. Keats, of course, was totally ignorant of Japanese art. For three hundred years, Japan had been sealed to all foreigners except a few Portuguese traders, and even these were allowed no farther than an island off Nagasaki. Yet that John Keats saw landscape from the same angle as the

great masters of Ukio-ye, a close student of his letters cannot fail to be aware.

Toward the end of the day, the misty rain turned into a regular downpour, and the soaked couple hurried down to Ballantrae extremely eager for food and shelter. The landlord of the inn at Stranraer, where they seem to have breakfasted, had told them "not to go to the Post Chaise inn, as things might not be quite comfortable there, because the landlord was a little in trouble." "A little in trouble!" exclaims the irate Brown, "he had been just taken up for being concerned in robbing the Paisley bank." The inn they were forced to go to in consequence was very poor, and the wind blowing up a gale soon turned the rain into a violent storm. During the evening, Keats wrote a decidedly clever attempt at a Scotch ballad in dialect, because Brown wanted to fool the antiquary Dilke by sending it to him as a *bona fide* Galloway song. The subject Keats took from a wedding party they had encountered on the road. The ballad is, as I say, a clever imitation, yet Keats was right in observing "but it won't do." This sort of thing was not his business, and a tyro could have spotted it at once, for all its ingenuity, as not done by a Scotchman. Meanwhile the storm was increasing in fury minute by minute. All night the miserable little building in which they were, shook, and squeaked, and groaned, clapping its windows and rattling its doors, with the result that neither Keats nor Brown got a wink of sleep. It was rather a bedraggled pair, therefore, who set forth next day to walk the thirteen miles to Girvan. But the rain at least had stopped, and at Girvan they found, says Keats with appreciation, "comfortable quarters."

Their usual day's mileage was about twenty miles, but the good inn at Girvan tempted them to fare no farther that day. Instead, Keats wrote a sonnet on Ailsa Rock. There seems to have been something about this part of Scotland which made it, to Keats's thinking, unsympa-

thetic to the Shakespearian form of sonnet. Of course, there is no reason why a poet should not write in both the Petrarchan and Shakespearian modes, using either at will. In Keats's case, he seems to have employed them during this Summer almost at haphazard. If any clue can be found, it appears to lie in the associations which the two forms carried with them, rather than in any sense of fitness in the subjects themselves. It is, perhaps, pushing possibilities somewhat far to suggest that the sonnet *To my Brother George*, written at Margate in 1816, and the sonnet *On the Sea*, written at Carisbrooke in 1817, have a certain thematic connection with *Ailsa Rock*. This is a point to be glanced at merely, nothing more.

Keats calls *To Ailsa Rock* "the only Sonnet of any worth I have of late written." It does, in fact, come near to being a very fine sonnet, but the confusion and obscure phrasing of the octave prevent the general effect from being what it should be. The sestet contains the proud lines:

> ". . . thou art dead asleep;
> Thy life is but two dead eternities —
> The last in air, the former in the deep;
> First with the whales, last with eagle-skies —"

The final two lines, however (which I do not quote), are weak and inadequate, and drop the tone once more.

Saturday morning was begun with the usual trudge to breakfast, this time of eight miles to Kirkoswald. In the short rest which the travellers always seem to have allowed themselves after breakfast, Keats continued his letter to Tom begun at Ballantrae, and again his theme is the difference between the Scotch and Irish characters; it is amusing here to see that Keats was so thorough-going an Englishman as to experience considerable difficulty in understanding the Irish, although at the same time noting with much shrewdness certain of their prominent traits. He is careful to say that he is speaking of the common people only, as

he knows nothing of the higher classes. His analysis, which I give entire, is:

> "As to the 'Profanum vulgus' I must incline to the Scotch. They never laugh — but they are always comparatively neat and clean. Their constitutions are not so remote and puzzling as the Irish. The Scotchman will never give a decision on any point — he will never commit himself in a sentence which may be referred to as a meridian in his notion of things — so that you do not know him — and yet you may come in nigher neighbourhood to him than to the Irishman who commits himself in so many places that it dazes your head. A Scotchman's motive is more easily discovered than an Irishman's. A Scotchman will go wisely about to deceive you, an Irishman cunningly. An Irishman would bluster out of any discovery to his disadvantage. A Scotchman would retire perhaps without much desire for revenge. An Irishman likes to be thought a gallous fellow. A Scotchman is contented with himself. It seems to me they are both sensible of the Character they hold in England and act accordingly to Englishmen. Thus the Scotchman will become over grave and over decent and the Irishman over-impetuous. I like a Scotchman best because he is less of a bore — I like the Irishman best because he ought to be more comfortable. — The Scotchman has made up his Mind with himself in a sort of snail shell wisdom. The Irishman is full of strongheaded instinct. The Scotchman is farther in Humanity than the Irishman — there he will stick perhaps when the Irishman will be refined beyond him — for the former thinks he cannot be improved — the latter will grasp at it forever, place but the good plain before him."

Scotchman — Irishman — here we have them in most excellent silhouette. Nobody who knows the two races will deny the verisimilitude of this portrayal; but there is a third nationality which peeps out of the background of the picture — that of the Englishman who has drawn it. For Keats is here perfectly generic; if he is indubitably himself in the expression of his opinions, these same opinions, even

to the being "puzzled" and "dazed" and finding Irish repartee a bore, are conclusively English. They bear the stamp of their origin for all to see.

Fearful of missing anything, our eager tourists stretched out the four miles to Maybole by going out of their way to see a couple of ruins, one of them Crossraguel Abbey, where Keats was struck with "a winding Staircase to the top of a little Watch Tower." But this was all mere dalliance by the way, a rambling preliminary to the cottage where Burns was born. For Keats was determined that this cottage was to be one of his shrines. Writing to Reynolds from Maybole, he says:

> "I am approaching Burns's cottage very fast . . . One of the pleasantest means of annulling self is approaching such a shrine as the Cottage of Burns — we need not think of his misery — that is all gone, bad luck to it — I shall look upon it hereafter with unmixed pleasure as I do upon my Stratford-on-Avon day with Bailey."

The event, when it came, was not quite the perfect and thrilling joy he had expected. But the expectation was so keen that onward the friends went from Maybole to reach Ayr that night. Keats had expected Ayrshire to provide him with no sensation other than that received from Burns's cottage. In this he was agreeably disappointed. "O prejudice!" he cries, having found a kind of country of which he had not dreamed, "it was as rich as Devon." The approach to Ayr he considered "extremely fine — quite outwent my expectations — richly meadowed, wooded, heathed and rivuleted — with a grand Sea view terminated by the black Mountains of the isle of Annan." This view set him wondering how it was that such a prospect "did not beckon Burns to some grand attempt at Epic." Here, for once, his perspicacity failed him, for he should have realized that Burns was not of the epic temper.

Keats's description of the entrance to Ayr is so vivid that I will transcribe it:

> "We came down upon everything suddenly — there were on our way the 'bonny Doon,' with the Brig that Tam o' Shanter crossed, Kirk Alloway, Burns's Cottage, and the Brigs of Ayr. First we stood upon the Bridge across the Doon; surrounded by every Phantasy of green in Tree, Meadow, and Hill, — the stream of the Doon, as a Farmer told us, is covered with trees 'from head to foot' — you know those beautiful heaths so fresh against the weather of a summer's evening — there was one stretching along behind the trees."

This Keats wrote to Reynolds. In another account, sent to his brother Tom, he calls the Doon "the sweetest river I ever saw — overhung with fine trees as far as we could see."

At last came the Cottage! The mystic shrine which was to live in his memory forever as the generator of a pleasure little short of absolute. Poor Keats! He took no note of the fact that to receive such an impression as he craved, to undergo the keen sensations for which he was hungering, demands a physical energy powerful enough to respond to the given stimulus. But here he was, at the end of a long day during which he had traversed something over twenty-one miles on foot. He may not have felt tired, but clearly he was, so tired that his nerves were on edge, and the garrulous old caretaker at the cottage — whose garrulity, by the way, being in the broadest Scotch, made his gossip almost incomprehensible — nearly drove him mad. This old caretaker had known Burns, and his remarks might have been interesting, but somehow Keats did not find them so in the main. "Damn him and damn his anecdotes — he was a great bore," is Keats's harassed comment. So he puts it to Tom; to Reynolds, he is more explicit:

> "We went to the Cottage and took some Whisky. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines

> under the roof — they are so bad I cannot transcribe them. The Man at the Cottage was a great Bore with his anecdotes — I hate the rascal — his life consists in fuzz, fuzzy, fuzziest. He drinks glasses five for the Quarter and twelve for the hour [1] — he is a mahogany-faced old Jackass who knew Burns. He ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him . . . O the flummery of a birthplace! Cant! cant! cant! It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache. Many a true word, they say, is spoken in jest — this may be because his gab hindered my sublimity: the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet."

A watched pot never boils, and forced poetry usually does no more than crawl along the ground of prose on its belly. It was foolishness extraordinary to set his fagged brain to work composing poetry when he was in no mood for it. But we have already noticed [2] his constant desire to write in places whose associations intrigued him. He was under no illusion as to the merit of his sonnet, as this passage shows, and he says the same thing to Tom: "I was determined to write a sonnet in the Cottage — and I did — but it was so bad I cannot venture it here." Before a week was over, he had torn it up, but not before Brown had copied it, a fact which he seems not to have known.

Considering the connection in his mind between Burns's cottage, and Shakespeare's house at Stratford-on-Avon, it is not strange to find that this sonnet is written in the Shakespearian form. Rossetti thought the sonnet "a fine thing," and Lord Houghton was of the opinion that "The local colour is strong in it . . . and its geniality would have delighted the object of its admiration." I find it none of these things, but on the contrary laboured and impatient; indeed I think one of its lines:

> "Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal"

aptly describes it. But what really upset Keats about it

[1] Misquoted from Coleridge's *Christabel*. [2] See Vol. I, p. 552.

was that he intended it to be, not full of local colour, no reminiscent of "Willie brewed a peck o' mau't," but a tribute to those sides of Burns which transcended his mortal frailties, and from this point of view the sonnet is a dead failure.

The next two days were spent in getting to Glasgow. The journey seems to have been broken at Kilmarnock, for Keats tells Reynolds that the rain has stopped them at the end of a dozen miles, and on Monday, July thirteenth, he writes from Kingswell to Tom. Kingswell is nine miles beyond Kilmarnock by the old coach road, and the wayfarers probably stopped there for breakfast or dinner, as they were certainly in Glasgow that night, which was twelve miles farther on. In tracing Keats's route and the things he did in Scotland, it is important to remember that meal-times were divided very differently in 1818 from what they are now. Keats and Brown seem to have started the day at about five in the morning, as we have seen, breakfastless. The ordinary breakfast hour of the period was about nine A.M., dinner was partaken of at three or four, and a third meal, which Keats usually calls "tea," but which most of the world called "supper," came along quite late, generally at nine in the evening. The long Summer days in a latitude so far North as Scotland meant that it was light until far into the evening, even in London in July twilight does not end until eleven P.M. On Monday, July thirteenth, 1818, the sun did not set until after eight o'clock. It was probably, therefore, in full daylight that Brown and Keats "entered Glasgow last evening under the most impressive Stare a body could feel." This was written on July fourteenth, so we know that Glasgow was reached on Monday, the thirteenth.

The two dusty young fellows, with their obvious air of having walked long and far, seem to have greatly intrigued those Glaswegians who happened to encounter them that evening. Keats says: "When we had crossed the Bridge

Brown look'd back and said its whole pop[ulation] had turned [out] to wonder at us," and he tells of a drunken man who declared that "he had seen all foreigners bu-u-ut he never saw the like o' me," and was only shaken off by being threatened with the police. That they were a queer looking pair can be clearly seen by Brown's description of himself sent in a letter to Mr. Dilke senior. "An odd fellow," he calls himself, "and moreover an odd figure; imagine me with a thick stick in my hand, the knapsack on my back, 'with spectacles on my nose,' a white hat, a tartan coat and trowsers, and a Highland plaid thrown over my shoulders! Don't laugh at me, there's a good fellow, although Mr. Keats calls me the Red Cross Knight, and declares my own shadow is ready to split its sides as it follows me." Keats wore a plaid and a fur cap — this last a sufficiently odd choice in head-gear for the middle of Summer, he says that he only met one other such throughout his travels — and he also carried the inevitable and mystifying knapsack.

The next morning they saw the cathedral — "they have devilled it into 'High Kirk,'" remarks Keats with pungent emphasis — and presumably went on their way in the afternoon; but at this point the days become confused, and we can only state that they followed the banks of the Clyde to Dumbarton, and from there turned due North to Loch Lomond. Here the sight of the solitary steam-boat which plied to and fro on the lake for the benefit of tourists, and the carriages of sightseers on its shores, brought forth from Keats the very natural complaint: "Steam Boats on Loch Lomond and Barouches on its sides take a little from the Pleasure of such romantic chaps as Brown and I." Going along up the West side of Loch Lomond, they seem to have reached Tarbet on Wednesday evening, July fifteenth. Of this part of the Lake, Keats says:

> "The north end of Loch Lomond grand in excess — the entrance at the lower end to the narrow part from a little

> distance is precious good — the Evening was beautiful nothing could surpass our fortune in the weather — yet was I worldly enough to wish for a fleet of chivalry Barges with Trumpets and Banners just to die away before me into that blue place among the mountains."

Here follows a sketch, which Sir Sidney Colvin recognizes as taken from a spot near Tarbet.

Tarbet Inn was the usual point of departure for an ascent of Ben Lomond, but this most lauded excursion Keats and Brown did not make, the price of a boat across the lake and a guide up the mountain proving sufficient deterrents. Here, indeed, the pedestrians were in the route of fashionable excursionists, and prices were according to the traffic, which in the height of Summer was considerable. Doubtless the two young men did not have the appearance of being over prolific in tips, and things were not made easy for them. My grandfather records in his journal an experience which gives us a clear idea of the hierarchy of travellers in the eyes of Scotch innkeepers of the period. Passing over the same route which Keats had just traversed, but in inverse order, my grandfather posted a part of the way. The result of this method of travelling was, he declares, that "at every inn where we alighted, there were six waiters and as many chambermaids, to help us out of the chaise. Had we been coach passengers, we should at most have seen of these worthies little more than their backs." As the greater part of my grandfather's journey was made by coach, he knew whereof he spoke. The hierarchy aforesaid consisted, first and foremost, of people in their own carriages; second, of post-chaise travellers; and third, of coach passengers. Wayfarers on foot were neither expected nor welcomed, and we may be certain that in this much frequented part of the Highlands Keats and Brown met with scant consideration.

Thursday, July sixteenth, seems to have been partly spent in strolling about the shores of Loch Lomond, for

Keats consoles himself for not going up Ben Lomond by the fact of "a half a day of rest being quite acceptable." It is interesting to note, as between the man of his period and the man ahead of his period, that my grandfather's account of this country is all asterisked over with quotations from Walter Scott's poems, while Keats never once alludes to them in any way.

As if to make up for the unwonted rest, by four the next morning Keats and Brown were up and off, intending to breakfast at the top of a glen nine miles on their road, where Brown's Itinerary mentioned a place called "Rest and be thankful." Arrived at the spot, to their dismay it turned out to be, not an inn, as they had assumed, but a stone seat, so they were obliged to foot it another five miles through another "Tremendous Glen" to what Keats calls "Cairn-something," which was probably what is now the Cairndow Hotel at the Head of Loch Fyne. Fourteen miles is a pretty stiff tramp before breakfast, but the effort had not been without its compensations. The glens were beautiful in the extreme, and coming through Glenside, says Keats, "it was early in the morning and we were pleased with the noise of Shepherds, Sheep and dogs in the misty heights close above us — we saw none of them for some time, till two came in sight creeping among the Crags like Emmets, yet their voices came quite plainly to us." It is in passages such as this that we see Keats's sensitiveness to impressions, which I have so often insisted upon, at its highest pitch. Nothing pertinent to the creation of atmosphere escaped him, and it is just these sudden flashes which make the Scotch letters interesting.

At Cairndow, the wanderers made their usual after-breakfast pause, during which Keats took a bath in Loch Fyne and got badly stung by gad-flies, an experience which produced from his irate soul a set of doggerel stanzas on the gad-fly. He also began a letter to Tom. Late in the afternoon, the friends rounded the top of Loch Fyne and

proceeded to Inverary, where they stopped for the night. On the way thither, they passed the Duke of Argyle's castle, which, with its surroundings, Keats describes in two words — another of his swift, sure tricks of delineation:

> "The Duke of Argyle's Castle is very modern magnificent and more so from the place it is in — the woods seem old enough to remember two or three changes in the Crags about them — the Lake was beautiful and there was a band at a distance by the Castle. I must say I enjoyed two or three common tunes — but nothing could stifle the horrors of a solo on the Bag-pipe — I thought the beast would never have done."

One might suppose that the day had contained enough to satisfy even the insatiable ardour of twenty-two. By no means. Seeing a play bill as they entered the town, which announced to all and sundry that that most beloved piece of the period, *The Stranger*, was to be performed in a near-by barn, Keats, leaving Brown who was "knocked up from new shoes" to repose in the inn, repaired thither and witnessed the well-known play to the intermittent accompaniment of another bagpipe. Famous though the play was, Keats had never seen it before, had not even read it, and his modernity and good taste are much in evidence in his criticism of it. "Not the Bag-pipe," he exclaims, "nor the wretched players themselves were little in comparison with it — thank heaven it has been scoffed at lately almost to a fashion." The bagpipe and *The Stranger* set Keats off upon an ironic sonnet, usually known as *On Hearing the Bag-pipe*, composed either that night or the next morning. The irony is enhanced by his choosing for it the Shakespearian form.

The next day, Saturday, July eighteenth, Brown's feet were in such a state that walking was not to be thought of, but he and Keats were consoled by the arrival of a thunderstorm which would have prevented them from going on in

any case. Keats spent the day in letter writing, first to Tom and then to Bailey.

This letter to Bailey is extremely important, for it reveals a side of Keats on which he is usually peculiarly reticent, but which seems to have occupied him not a little at the time. Before coming to that, however, there is another little flash of self-revelation, which, as he wrote it, was part actual fact, part camouflage, and part undoubtedly a persuasion of himself that what he wished had indeed happened. To understand the significance of the passage, we must remember two things. The first is the letter from Burford Bridge to Bailey in which Keats speaks of his changing moods;[1] the second is the letter of June tenth to the same correspondent, that terrible letter of grief and discouragement, written just after George's marriage, in which Keats gazed open-eyed at the future and saw only misery ahead.[2] Evidently Keats's confession of himself had greatly distressed Bailey. What Bailey had said to him about the matter, we do not know, but this is certainly his reply to it:

> "And here, Bailey, I will say a few words written in a sane and sober mind, a very scarce thing with me, for they may, hereafter, save you a great deal of trouble about me, which you do not deserve, and for which I ought to be bastinadoed. I carry all matters to an extreme — so that when I have any little vexation, it grows in five minutes into a theme for Sophocles. Then, and in that temper, if I write to any friend, I have so little self-possession that I give him matter for grieving, at the very time perhaps when I am laughing at a Pun. Your last letter made me blush for the pain I had given you — I know my own disposition so well that I am certain of writing many times hereafter in the same strain to you — now you know how far to believe in them. You must allow for Imagination. I know I shall not be able to help it."

That Keats understood himself quite well in this par-

[1] See Vol. I, p. 524.

ticular, we have seen again and again — so much for the actual fact of the passage; that George's departure for America for life and Tom's serious illness could come under the head of "little vexations" even to his changed mood, it is ridiculous to suppose, this making light of events and his own past expressions in regard to them is the part which I have called camouflage, and leads us to the persuasion of himself which I have said is also here. The Scotch tramp had been tonic, and the bracing in nerves and point of view which he had undergone had certainly dulled the acuteness of his misery, but that he had been as entirely cured of his melancholy as he appears by his words to be is not likely, much as he wished to believe it. It was happily overlaid for the moment, and he had no wish to probe himself on the subject.

For the second, more important revelation, we must again recollect back and remind ourselves of Keats's growing irritation with the Reynolds girls.[1] He had felt it before his departure for Devonshire, and it would appear from this letter to Bailey that on his return to Hampstead he had found himself so out of love with them as practically to give up going to the Reynoldses' house. That Reynolds himself was as much his friend as ever, we know; and there is no sign that Reynolds resented his behaviour. Not so Bailey, who seems to have remonstrated vigorously with Keats on his altered attitude. A nice bit of irony, had Keats but been able to see into the future, for Bailey was about to submit to an alteration in his own attitude toward the Reynoldses, and Marianne in particular, much more dire than that of Keats could ever be.[2] When Keats was writing this letter from Inverary, Bailey's grand defection had probably taken place; but of this, Keats knew nothing.

Keats's answer to Bailey's strictures is as follows:

[3] "I am sorry you are grieved at my not continuing my

[1] See Vol. I, p. 587. [2] See Vol. I, pp. 478–479.

[3] This passage differs slightly from the printed version, having been corrected from the original letter in my possession.

visits to Little Britain. Yet I think I have as far as a Man can do who has Books to read and subjects to think upon — for that reason I have been no where else except to Wentworth Place so nigh at hand — moreover I have been too often in a state of health that made me think it prudent not to hazard the night air. Yet, further, I will confess to you that I cannot enjoy Society, small or numerous. I am certain that our fair friends are glad I should come for the mere sake of my coming; but I am certain I bring with me a vexation they are better without. If I can possibly at any time feel my temper coming upon me I refrain even from a promised visit. I am certain I have not a right feeling towards women — at this moment I am striving to be just to them, but I cannot. Is it because they fall so far beneath my boyish Imagination? When I was a schoolboy I thought a fair woman a pure Goddess; my mind was a soft nest in which some one of them slept, though she knew it not. I have no right to expect more than their reality — I thought them ethereal above men — I find them perhaps equal — great by comparison is very small. Insult may be inflicted in more ways than by word or action. One who is tender of being insulted does not like to think an insult against another. I do not like to think insults in a lady's company — I commit a crime with her which absence would not have known. Is it not extraordinary? — when among men, I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen — I feel free to speak or be silent — I can listen, and from every one I can learn — my hands are in my pockets, I am free from all suspicion and comfortable. When I am among women, I have evil thoughts, malice, spleen — I cannot speak, or be silent — I am full of suspicions, and therefore listen to nothing — I am in a hurry to be gone. You must be charitable and put all this perversity to my being disappointed since my boyhood. Yet with such feelings I am happier alone among crowds of men, by myself, or with a friend or two. With all this, trust me — Bailey I have not the least idea that men of different feelings and inclinations are more short-sighted than myself. I never rejoiced more than at my Brother's marriage, and shall do so at that of any of my friends. I must absolutely get over this — but

how? the only way is to find the root of the evil, and so cure it 'with backward mutterings of dissevering power' — that is a difficult thing; for an obstinate Prejudice can seldom be produced but from a gordian complication of feelings, which must take time to unravel, and care to keep unravelled. I could say a good deal about this, but I will leave it, in hopes of better and more worthy dispositions — and also content that I am wronging no one, for after all I do think better of womankind than to suppose they care whether Mister John Keats five feet high likes them or not.[1] You appear'd to wish to avoid any words on this subject — don't think it a bore my dear fellow, it shall be my Amen."

Of course Keats's *malaise* in the presence of women was merely the reverse of a ripening sexual instinct. Such *mauvaise honte* is a very common phenomenon of adolescence. Most boys experience something of the sort at about sixteen. Keats's peculiarity is that, with him, it held off until he was twenty-two, and, coming so late, found a brain and senses so far matured beyond it as to give the instinct itself a touch of tragedy by presenting it to the consciousness all tangled up with thoughts, and reflections, and introspections, which the boy in his 'teens is happily without. There is undoubtedly truth in Keats's belief that his love for his Brothers had prevented any woman from making a deep impression upon him, as he had told Bailey some six weeks before;[2] but it is also true that Keats had to mature many sides of himself. We have seen his progress from boyhood. We have watched, first, the growth of his poetical power, then, later, the development of his thinking capacity, his quality of reasoning, the increase of his intellectual curiosity. The last part of his personality to come to man's estate was the sexual. Fleeting sexual attractions, he had known; but he had always been clear headed enough to recognize their superficiality. Intellectually he had perfectly apprehended

[1] See Vol. I, p. 96. [2] See Vol. II, p. 10.

the dual quality of love, as I have shown in my analysis of *Endymion*, but when in actual life the significance of woman as the corresponding sex presented itself to him, he failed to recognize what was happening. With the banishment of momentary lust as a sufficient satisfaction, what he received in compensation was not the realization of any specific need for love in its entirety as embodied in any known woman, but a sudden suspicion of all women because of his altered awareness of them, shorn as this was of the corrective of strong individual attraction. The stage was being set for Fanny Brawne, although of such a condition in himself he had no idea. Sexual psychology was not in the least understood a century ago. The quasi-knowledge of the subject possessed by other and older civilizations had long been lost. Keats's utter ignorance of what was the matter with him seems strange in this super-sexualized beginning of the twentieth century, when every school-boy babbles Freud, and, if we think we know much more than we do, at least no young person is likely to consider a given condition as not due to the sexual instinct when it is. If Keats had been able "to find the root of the evil," he would have been much better equipped to cope with his love for Fanny Brawne when it came; but this root was just what he could not find. Sex, the world understood; but not the connection of sex with mental phenomena. So Keats groped, shocked at himself, and remained in ignorance, confessing everything to Bailey as was his wont — Bailey, the last man who could help him under the circumstances. Bailey, as Keats said later, loved like a ploughman, and pursued the changing objects of his desire with a satyr-like lack of deviousness. At the time of Keats's writing, his last quarry had fallen into his arms, and he was, if not yet the accepted, certainly the encouraged, lover of Miss Gleig.

As a sort of addenda to what he considered his prejudiced view of womankind, Keats wrote immediately after it:

> "I should not have consented to myself these four months tramping in the highlands, but that I thought it would give me more experience, rub off more prejudice, use to more hardships, identify finer scenes, load me with grander mountains, and strengthen more my reach in Poetry, than would stopping at home among books, even though I should reach Homer."

Probably he was right; but one can have too much of anything, and fatigue is a great discountenancer. That his eager response to the scenery was becoming a little dulled by habit, can be seen in this sentence:

> "By this time I am comparatively a Mountaineer. I have been among wilds and mountains too much to break out much about their grandeur. I have fed upon oat-cake — not long enough to be very much attached to it. — The first mountains I saw, though not so large as some I have seen since, weighed very solemnly upon me. The effect is wearing away — yet I like them mainly."

Keats was a gallant and loyal soul, and it never seems to have crossed his mind that the trip for him had passed its meridian and that to continue it was, considering the coarse and monotonous food which was all that was obtainable in the roadside taverns on the way, an imprudence. He was pledged for the Summer to Brown and pedestrianism, and had no intention of changing his plans. His digestion began to suffer, and no wonder. On Sunday, July nineteenth, the friends trudged twenty miles down the side of Loch Awe; Brown, with his feet blistered, scarcely able to walk. Where they spent the night, we do not know, but their supper consisted of eggs and oat-cake. "We have lost the sight of white bread entirely," bemoans Keats; and, concerning the supper, he exclaims: "Now we had eaten nothing but Eggs all day — about 10 a piece and they had become sickening." Things were not always as bad as this, on Monday they managed to procure "a small

Chicken and even a good bottle of Port" somewhere, but Keats admits "all together the fare is too coarse — I feel it a little." Still the walk had been beautiful: "We had come along a complete mountain road, where if one listened there was not a sound but that of Mountain Streams," writes Keats, and "The approach to Loch Awe was very solemn towards nightfall — the first glance was a streak of water deep in the Bases of large black mountains." Nearing the sea, Keats once again becomes enthusiastic: "the distant Mountains in the Hebrides very grand, the Salt-water Lakes coming up between Crags and Islands full tide and scarcely ruffled." They also saw "an Eagle or two." "They move about without the least motion of Wings when in an indolent fit," his always alert observation announces.

Monday night seems to have been passed, for a wonder, in a comfortable inn, but where it stood is not stated. How comfortable this inn was, we can infer by its furnishings, among which was a table, "a nice flapped Mahogany one." "There is a Gaelic Testament on the Drawers in the next room," Keats adds, and does not fail to notice that "White and blue China ware has crept all about here." This last is an illuminating touch, and gives us the period in a nutshell. For where was the inn or well-to-do farmer's house throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to which the blue and white pottery plates of the indefatigable Wedgwood had not penetrated. They were a symbol of the period, although, of course, the period never looked upon them in any such light.

Reaching Oban on Tuesday, the twenty-first, in a soaking rain, their first thought was that here was the place to embark for the Island of Staffa, where was Fingal's Cave which they were most anxious to see, the more so, undoubtedly, because they had missed the Giant's Causeway. On making inquiries, however, they found once again that

this was a popular excursion, and the boat price in consequence had mounted to the extortionate sum of seven guineas. This was a baffler, and they reluctantly decided to give up Staffa and go straight on next day to Fort William. Having come to this decision, they were ruefully trying to digest it, when in came one of the men of whom they had been making inquiries. This astute person suggested that the cheapest way to reach Staffa was to take the ferry which ran between Oban and the Island of Kerrara, and at Kerrara shift to another ferry plying from Kerrara to Mull. He offered himself as guide across the latter island, at the Southwestern end of which, he declared, a boat could be hired for the short distance to Staffa and back. After some haggling, a bargain was struck, and the next day, Wednesday, the friends and their optimistic guide ferried, first to Kerrara, and then to Mull, the last crossing of nine miles being accomplished "in forty minutes with a fine Breeze."

Mull was almost totally unfrequented by travellers, the trip to Staffa and return being usually made entirely by water, in the boat of prohibitive prices. Their first day's experience is described by Keats to Tom thus:

> "The road through the Island, or rather the track, is the most dreary you can think of — between dreary Mountains — over bog and rock and river with our Breeches tucked up and our Stockings in hand. About eight o'Clock we arrived at a shepherd's Hut into which we could scarcely get for the Smoke through a door lower than my shoulders. We found our way into a little compartment with the rafters and turf thatch blackened with smoke — the earth floor full of Hills and Dales. We had some white Bread with us, made a good supper and slept in our Clothes in some Blankets."

The following morning, July twenty-third, they walked six miles to a place set down by Keats as Dun an cullen, which both Buxton Forman and Sir Sidney Colvin think

may have been Derrynacullen. Here Keats began another letter to Tom, and finished the one begun at Inverary to Bailey. After finishing Bailey's letter, he proceeded to cross it with a poem, the genesis of which he gives by saying that he has destroyed the wretched sonnet written in Burns's cottage, but that "a few days afterwards I wrote some lines cousin-german to the circumstance, which I will transcribe." The poem is *Lines written in the Highlands after a Visit to Burns's Country.*

When were these *Lines* written? Unfortunately, we have really no clue to guide us to any sort of determination on the subject. I am inclined to attribute them to the nice flapped Mahogany table in the nameless inn on account of the line:

"Eagles may seem to sleep wing wide upon the Air,"

which seems to establish a connection with his mention of eagles to Tom in the letter written on that same table. This is the first time that he speaks of eagles, and the passage reads as though it were the first time that he had seen any. But, on the other hand, the scenery of the poem is clearly not that of the country he was then traversing. The first line:

"There is a charm in footing slow across a silent plain,"

does not refer to any spot gone over in the days immediately preceding his sojourn in the inn of the flapped table. Exactly what place, or type of place, the poem describes, I leave for those familiar with the ground to ferret out. For me, who have never been in that part of the Scotch Highlands, such ferreting is impossible. It is but fair to say, however, that a poet has no need to be in the place that he is describing. I have already pointed out, in the chapter on *Endymion*,[1] that reminiscence is a potent

[1] See Vol. I, p. 388.

factor in creative art. That Keats was far from any "silent plain," is rather more a reason for his writing of one than not.

The first part of the poem is excellent description; just this and no more. Nowhere throughout it do we find the slightest hint of Keats's usual charm when dealing with nature, not once is there a single flash of his genius for evocation. The plod of his feet is echoed in his lines, and we cannot suppress the conviction that the poem was written, not because he could not resist it, but because he wanted to try again to write something about Burns to take the taste of his unsuccessful sonnet out of his mouth. The end is a didactic presentation of the giddiness produced by a contemplation of life's futility in the midst of heroic and rather forbidding scenery. A curious thing about the poem, and perhaps its chief interest, is the fact that it is written in a very old English measure — the septenary, called so because it has seven beats, or fourteen syllables, to a line. In its unbroken form, as here, it is not very common in recent English poetry, although both Wordsworth and Mrs. Browning wrote rhymed septenaries, but when each line is divided into two, the first having four beats and the last three, it becomes the regular ballad stanza; in its broken form, it is also much employed by the writers of hymns. Keats's familiarity with it in the original long line may have come from many sources, but undoubtedly the chief of these, for him, was Chapman's translation of the *Odyssey*. Keats himself does not seem to have been over pleased with these *Lines* for he never again refers to them to any one, at least not in the letters which have come down to us.

To return to the Island of Mull. It was thirty-seven miles across from where the ferry landed the travellers to the tip end of the Ross of Mull, whither they were bound. We have already seen what Keats had to say of the first day, here is what Brown says of all the days:

[1] "I must not think of the wind, and the sun, and the rain, after our journey to the Island of Mull. There's a wild place! Thirty-seven miles of jumping and flinging over great stones along no path at all, up the steep and down the steep, and wading through rivulets up to the knees, and crossing a bog, a mile long, up to the ankles."

To add to all this discomfort, Keats caught a cold which flew to his throat. On they struggled, however, somewhat cheered by the guide's singing of Gaelic songs, and in due time reached the coast directly opposite the Island of Iona. Crossing the narrow strip of water to this island, they paid a visit to the ruins of the great cathedral church still standing there. Keats was greatly impressed by these ruins. I only wish there were space to quote his account of them, sent to Tom, but it is too long. At Iona, the friends bargained for a boat to take them to Staffa and land them afterwards at the head of Loch na Keal, from which place the distance back to the ferry would be reduced by at least one half.

Fingal's Cave in the Island of Staffa was a new sensation, and amply repaid Keats for the abominable tramp across Mull. Neither his fatigue nor his sore throat could dampen his delight. "Suppose now," he says, in an effort to give Tom some idea of the place, "the Giants who rebelled against Jove had taken a whole Mass of black Columns and bound them together like bunches of matches — and then with immense Axes had made a cavern in the body of these columns — of course the roof and floor must be composed of the broken ends of the Columns — such is fingal's Cave except that the Sea has done the work of excavations and is continually dashing there — so that we walk along the sides of the cave on the pillars which are left as if for convenient stairs." So much for the contour of the place; but for the colour, Keats, rare colourist that he was, misses no shade of it. He says: "the colour of the columns is a sort of

[1] Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

black with a lurking gloom of purple therein," which is almost a poem as it stands. His complete impression of the cave he sums up in a sentence: "For solemnity and grandeur it far surpasses the finest Cathedral." Another of his sentences I must give for its vividness, and also, again, its colour: "As we approached in the boat there was such a fine swell of the sea that the pillars appeared rising immediately out of the crystal." His conclusion, however, is that "it is impossible to describe it." Having given up description, he takes to poetry and symbolism, and transcribes the poem known as *Staffa*. In *Staffa*, Lycidas is conjured up as the custodian of this great sea cathedral, consecrated to, and built by, Oceanus. The poem, without being really very memorable, has an undeniable charm, and it has more, for somehow it gives a perfect impression of water dashing against wet stone. It smells of dampness, and rings thunderous with waves. At the end, Keats's fit of creation suddenly deserted him, and the six lines immediately preceding the last two descend into something little better than doggerel.

The Staffa day was bright and sunny, or at least it became so at the very moment when the travellers sighted the island, a welcome contrast to the weather they had been having. Dolphins circled up out of the water, and the sun glinted on the waves. All this was new — not mountain, nor lake, nor heather — new, and Keats reacted accordingly.

With Staffa, the objective of the excursion from Oban was reached, and back the friends came, by foot and ferry, to that town, where they seem to have arrived on the evening of Saturday, July twenty-fifth. Keats's throat was giving him a good deal of trouble, although he only says of it: "I have a slight sore throat and think it best to stay a day or two at Oban." But his fatigue is very evident in this remark to Tom: "I assure you I often long for a seat and a Cup o' tea at Well Walk — especially now that

mountains, castles and Lakes are becoming common to me — yet I would rather summer it out, for on the whole I am happier than when I have time to be glum — perhaps it may cure me."

How many days the "day or two" were in actual fact, is a blank, but by Saturday, August first, the pair were at Fort William, from which place they made the ascent of Ben Nevis on Sunday, the second. Keats's madness in submitting himself to such a strain in his fatigued condition is easily accounted for by realizing that no young fellow of twenty-two likes to admit himself too tired to keep up with his companions. Brown's foolishness in permitting Keats to go, is another thing. But Brown was unaccustomed to considering his own health, which never wanted consideration, and probably, also, he believed Keats's statement that his throat was "in a fair way of getting well," this he told Tom the next day, but such indeed was not the case. Madness and folly, the ascent of Ben Nevis certainly was, but up they went just the same. And what young man of spunk would have held back? For again we must remember that Keats had no idea that his sore throats betokened any illness beyond themselves.

The weather, which had treated them so considerately at Staffa, accorded them no such capricious indulgence during the ascent of Ben Nevis. When our travellers started, at about five o'clock in the morning, with their guide — a gentleman attired, remarks Keats, with his indefatigable instinct for noting everything, "in Tartan and Cap," — the day promised well; then, half-way up, the climbers suddenly walked into a mist, which obstinately clung to them thereafter in varying degrees of denseness. But here Keats shall retail his own experience:

> "I am heartily glad it is done — it is almost like a fly crawling up a wainscoat. Imagine the task of mounting ten Saint Pauls without the convenience of Staircases. . . after much fag and tug and a rest and a glass of whiskey

apiece we gained the top of the first rise and saw then a tremendous chap above us, which the guide said was still far from the top. After the first Rise our way lay along a heath valley in which there was a Loch — after about a Mile in this Valley we began upon the next ascent, more formidable by far than the last, and kept mounting with short intervals of rest until we got above all vegitation, among nothing but loose Stones which lasted us to the very top — the Guide said we had three Miles of a stony ascent — we gained the first tolerable level after the valley to the height of what in the Valley we had thought the top and saw still above us another huge crag which still the Guide said was not the top — to that we made with an obstinate fag, and having gained it there came on a Mist, so that from that part to the very top we walked in a Mist."

Snow began to appear here and there. Every now and then, the party stopped, and Keats and Brown tumbled stones into the fissures between the rocks to hear the echoes reverberating up to them "in fine style." If the first part of the climb had seemed difficult, the loose stones of the last part were a thousand times more trying. Keats does full justice to the discomforts of the final pull to the summit in the letter to Tom from which I have been quoting:

"I have said nothing yet of our getting on among the loose stones large and small sometimes on two, sometimes on three, sometimes on four legs — sometimes two and stick, sometimes three and stick, then four again, then two, then a jump, so that we kept on ringing changes on foot, hand, stick, jump, boggle, stumble, foot, hand, foot (very gingerly), stick again and then again a game at all fours."

Of course, to an experienced Alpine climber, the ascent of Ben Nevis (it is only a little over four thousand feet in height) is mere child's play at going up a mountain. But Keats and Brown, accustomed as they had become to tramping, were the veriest amateurs at mountaineering.

Remember, too, that Keats was suffering from the combined effects of a bad sore throat and indigestion. Remember still farther that he was already a prey to tuberculosis, little as he, or any one else, thought so at the time. If we steadily keep in mind these things, we shall quickly lose all desire to smile at his and Brown's belief that in climbing Ben Nevis they were performing quite a feat; on the contrary, seen in the light of the actual circumstances, the climb becomes tragic, and the whirling mists which encompassed them on their way, the grey wings of a hovering doom.

After a time, the mists thinned and cleared, but still, every now and then, clouds swept over the mountain and obscured the view. To Keats, these swirling wreaths of cloud appeared as

> "large dome curtains which kept sailing about, opening and shutting at intervals here and there and everywhere: so that although we did not see one vast wide extent of prospect all round we saw something perhaps finer — these cloudveils opening with a dissolving motion and showing us the mountainous region beneath as through a loophole — these cloudy loopholes ever varying and discovering fresh prospect east, west, north and south. Then it was misty again, and again it was fair — then puff came a cold breeze of wind and bared a craggy chap we had not seen though in close neighborhood. Every now and then we had overhead blue Sky clear and the sun pretty warm."

Keats attempts to give Tom "an Idea of the prospect from a large Mountain top." After saying that the summit seems to one standing upon it like a "stony plain which of course makes you forget you are on any but low ground," he proceeds to describe what he saw from there excellently, but in the veriest prose. All of a sudden his expression changes, and one of his peculiar spurts of imaginative presentation gushes over him. For here is the epitome of his sensations at the moment, in the last phrase: "but the

most new thing of all is the sudden leap of the eye from the extremity of what appears a plain into so vast a distance."

At the top, the party made a long halt, during which the guide, to whom the ascent of Ben Nevis was an every-day affair, told the incredulous friends that, only a few years before, a Mrs. Cameron, "50 years of age and the fattest woman in all Invernesshire" had managed to get up the mountain. "True she had her servants," says Keats, "but then she had herself."

The idea of the portly Mrs. Cameron being pushed and hauled up the steep track which he and Brown had mounted with such difficulty, amused Keats greatly, and either then and there on the mountain, or the next day when he was writing to Tom, he scribbled down a jocose dialogue supposed to have been held between the mountain and the lady upon her arrival at the top. But Keats was really impressed by the grandeur of the mountain and his glimpses of the view. Surely here was a place which must inspire him! The result, as we should expect, was a sonnet, and by no means a bad one, considering that this was an occasional piece — Keats distinctly tells Tom that the sonnet was written on the top of Ben Nevis. Its marked importance, however, is biographical, for it shows that the speculations on the meaning of life, and of man's supreme ignorance on the subject, those speculations with which we are already so familiar, were still very actively pursuing him. He had reached no solution of the riddle, had not found even a working hypothesis of the kind which commonly goes by the name of religion. His profound doubt and confusion are given in the last lines of the *Ben Nevis* sonnet as follows:

> "Here are the craggy stones beneath my feet, —
> Thus much I know that, a poor witless elf,
> I tread on them, — that all my eye doth meet
> Is mist and crag, not only on this height,
> But in the world of thought and mental might!"

Going down the mountain proved to be even more wracking than climbing up it. "I felt it horribly," Keats tells Tom. "Twas the most vile descent — shook me all to pieces."

After such an exertion, common-sense should have counselled the two young men to take another day or two's rest at Fort William, but common-sense seems to have deserted them at this juncture. With only such refreshment as a night's sleep could give them, they started the next day, Monday, August third. Sometime on that day, they stopped at Letterfinlay (called by Keats "Letter Findlay"), but whether or not they passed the night there it is impossible to tell. All that we know definitely of this lap of the journey is that on Thursday, August sixth, they were at Inverness, having probably got there the day before.

Keats had told Tom in his letter of August third from Letterfinlay, that his sore throat was getting well, but if he had been deceived into thinking so, he had found out his mistake by the time he reached Inverness. So bad had his throat become, in fact, that he went to see a doctor, who told him at once, and succinctly, that he must forego the rest of the trip and get home as quickly as possible. "Mr. Keats," writes Brown to Mr. Dilke senior, "is too unwell for fatigue and privation . . . He caught a violent cold in the Isle of Mull, which, far from leaving him, has become worse, and the physician here thinks him too thin and fevered to proceed on our journey." This decision must have been a sudden one for, on August sixth, Keats wrote to Mrs. Wylie, and in that letter he says nothing of any immediate return, but by August eighth he was already on his way.

Sometime before the separation, Keats and Brown visited the ruins of Beauly Abbey. At that time, these ruins were used as a burial place, and one very badly attended to, it would seem, as the young men were struck by

the presence of a heap of bones and skulls which, probably with the intentional acquiescence of the guide, they took to be those of ancient monks. With this idea in mind, they wrote, either then or afterwards, a joint poem on the subject, in which they conjured up the worthy owners of the skulls in quite an amusing fashion, and in one of Burns's favourite stanza forms. So little of this joint production was done by Keats, however, that we need only refer to it in passing.[1]

In the original plan of the trip, Inverness was to be the turning point of it. Having come up by the West coast, the pedestrians had intended to return Southward by an entirely different route, which would take them through Edinburgh and eventually land Keats in Cumberland, where he intended to stay for a few days with Bailey, just settled in a curacy near Carlisle. We may surmise that, at the bottom of his heart, Keats was not sorry to be ordered home by the quickest and most convenient means. How game he was, how anxious to "carry on" until the last moment, can be seen by the Beauly excursion. After all, what had already been accomplished was prodigious. Keats tells Mrs. Wylie that "Besides riding about 400, we have walked above 600 Miles." He is evidently counting from his start from London, but Brown says explicitly to Mr. Dilke; "I have already stumped away on my ten toes 642 miles."

There was nowhere that a direct coach to London could be reached short of Glasgow or Edinburgh; even of what Cary[2] calls "provincial coaches," there were none as far North as Inverness. Horse-back or cart were the only means of locomotion to be had, and neither could be thought of for Keats, who must avoid any extra fatigue.

[1] The poem is printed in full in Sir Sidney Colvin's *Life of John Keats*. Third Edition. Appendix II.

[2] Cary's *New Itinerary of the Great Roads throughout England and Wales, with many of the Principal Roads of Scotland*. 1819.

The alternative was to go by sea, and this Keats decided to do. A Cromarty smack, calling at Inverness on her way to London, offered him his opportunity, and on Saturday, August eighth, Keats bade good-bye to Brown, who was left behind to continue the tour as per schedule, and went on board. The trip was over, and its principal benefits to Keats had been to provide him with a bridge between the old order and the new, to give him *Meg Merrilies*, and fill him with impressions to be conjured up later for use in *Hyperion*.

So, sailing down the coast, we may leave him, and look for a little while at events in Hampstead which preceded his return.

## CHAPTER IX

### SORROW AND READJUSTMENT

At first, after the departure of his brothers, things seemed to go well with Tom. That he was extremely homesick, there can be no doubt. On the very day that the travellers started, Tom was minded to fulfil a commission with which John had entrusted him. This was to write to Taylor and ask him to give a copy of *Endymion* to Severn, who would call for it. Everyone knows that the first acts of a person left behind by someone who is going on a journey, someone whose going leaves an inevitable blank, are those which connect him with the departed. For Tom to sit down at once and write John's request to Taylor, is a proof of the extent of his homesickness. Another proof lies in the fact that on certain of John's letters to Tom from Scotland, Tom indorsed the date when the letter was received and the date on which it was answered. He probably did this on all the letters, but in many instances the indorsement has not come down to us. In those cases where it has, however, Tom answered the letter on the day that he received it. The day before he left for Scotland, Keats had written to Taylor, and, among other things, had asked a loan of books for Tom. How eagerly Tom longed for the books, and yet how much he feared that John's request for them had smacked of the importunate, can be seen by this wistful little postscript to his letter to Taylor:

> [1] "On consideration it strikes me that you will not be able to let me have books to read — your stock being as I should think mostly new and modern books."

But Taylor was a thoroughly good fellow, and he had Woodhouse at his elbow to egg him on. On Tuesday eve-

[1] From the original unpublished letter. Author's Collection.

ning, June thirtieth, Tom wrote again[1] thanking him for "the parcel of books," and saying that he likes "'Eustace's Tour' very much, and should be glad of the other books you have mentioned." On this day, he had just received John's first letter, and had sent it off on a round of inspection beginning with Reynolds. That Keats's friends did their best for the lonely Tom, we know; Haslam seems to have been particularly kind, and Wells, although his attentions took a mischievous and even cruel turn, was, very likely, merely trying to amuse his sick friend. I shall tell the story of his grievous "joke" presently. Sometime during the Summer, Tom Keats wrote the following note to Dilke. Since we have so little knowledge of the Hampstead side of the Summer, and since the note pictures Tom's condition so sharply — his alternate good and bad days, his constant intention toward cheerfulness — it should, I think, be given here.

[2] "My dear Dilke.

I am really concerned that you should be so ill as Mrs. Bentley reports this morning. Could you and Mrs. Dilke come out again, you would be sure to find me out of bed — sick people are supposed to have delicate stomachs, for my part I should like a slice of underdone surloin. I have sent you a trifle of fruit — the cherries are not so fine as I could wish. I hear London is full of the bowel complaint — has it not reached Hampstead?

Yours truly,
Thos. Keats."

The letter is dated merely "Tuesday morning," so we have only the cherries to guide us as to the month, but by their evidence I think we may suppose the note to belong either to the very end of June or to the early part of July. From the tone of it, it seems as though John had been gone

[1] Unpublished letter. Author's Collection.

[2] Original unpublished letter in the possession of the Keats Memorial Association. Hampstead, England.

some time. The reference to the sirloin is a terrible reminder of the debilitating diet which medical ignorance prescribed for tuberculous patients at that period, so adding the tortures of hunger to all the other sufferings they had to bear. We shall have occasion to notice this again when we come to Keats's days in Rome. Illness breathes in every word of Tom's letter, but plucky illness, illness possessed of a fighting spirit which will give way inch by inch as it must, but will yield no inch without a struggle.

Early in August, Tom became much worse, so much worse that the doctor urged Dilke to send for John. Writing to her father-in-law on Sunday, August sixteenth, Mrs. Dilke tells the story:

> [1] "John Keats's brother is extremely ill, and the doctor begged that his brother might be sent for. Dilke accordingly wrote to him, which was a very unpleasant task. However, from the journal received from Brown last Friday, he says Keats has been so long ill with his sore throat, that he is obliged to give up. I am rather glad of it, as he will not receive the letter, which might have frightened him very much, as he is extremely fond of his brother. How poor Brown will get on alone I know not, as he loses a cheerful, good-tempered, clever companion."

So the clouds hung heavy over Keats's destiny, and bided their time while the Cromarty smack pursued her leisurely way down the coast. But this was not all, mutterings of another storm were in the air, and the inevitable bursting of it was anxiously awaited by the forewarned Taylor and his confidants, Hessey and Woodhouse. The warning had come to Taylor as follows: So early as May, Taylor had taken the precaution, wise or unwise, of calling upon Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly*,[2] to plead for fair play for the newly published *Endymion*, to beg that the book, simply because its author happened to be a friend of Leigh

[1] *Papers of a Critic*, by Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke.
[2] Colvin. From information supplied by a great-niece of Taylor's.

Hunt's, should not be treated in a spirit of political rancour, but simply as a poem, a work of imagination, with no political bias at all. Early as he was in taking this step, Taylor was too late, for on Gifford's table lay a review of the book. Gifford was polite and non-committal, but Taylor carried away from the interview small hope that the review, which was not shown him, would be lenient. Whether Taylor communicated his fears to any of Keats's more immediate friends, such as Reynolds, whom Taylor constantly saw, we do not know. It is certain, however, that whether they knew of this particular instance or not, the situation could have been, and probably was, correctly postulated by all. In the case of one, we have his own word for it, and for the blunder his fear of the consequences to Keats led him into. The story of Bailey's meeting with Lockhart at Bishop Gleig's house in Scotland has often been told, but the letter to Taylor[1] in which he recounts it has never been printed before. The letter was written at Carlisle, and dated "August 29, 1818."

This is what Bailey says:

> "I have something to tell you respecting Endymion: but it must be *in your ear:* That is, I do not wish it to be repeated to Keats, it being my determination to do him all the good I can without creating mischief. I fear Endymion will be dreadfully cut up in the Edinburgh Magazine (Blackwood's). I met a man in Scotland who is concerned in that publication, & who abused poor Keats in a way that, although it was at the Bishop's table, I could hardly keep my tongue. I said that I supposed he would be attacked in Blackwood's. He replied 'not by *me*'; which would convey the insinuation he would be by someone *else*. The objections, he stated, were frivolous in the extreme. They chiefly respected the *rhymes*. But I feel convinced *now* the Poem will not sell; & I *fear* his future writings will not. In Scotland he is very much despised from what I could collect."

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

What had really happened, I take from another manuscript in the Woodhouse Book, Morgan Library. Bailey, with the best intentions, undertook to tell Lockhart a few facts of Keats's life, among others that he was "of a respectable family; & though he & his brothers & sister were orphans, they were left with a small but independent Patrimony. He had been brought up to the profession of medicine which he had abandoned for the pursuit of Literature." He was also careful to assure Lockhart that Hunt had had no hand in *Endymion*. What this innocuous information brought forth, the malicious twist by which it was made to argue in Keats's disfavour, utterly confounded Bailey when he read the review, and no wonder.

While all this awaited Keats, he was having a not unpleasant rest in the smack, eating hugely of beef (Scotch porridge, consumed with horn spoons, he could not stomach) and chatting with the other passengers, amused to find himself the only Englishman. This was, so far as is known, his first experience of a ship and of the open sea, and the latter must have impressed him as the perfect complement to the mountains he had been seeing, but we have only a few words from him about the voyage. Events at Hampstead, when he reached it, were such as to throw his experiences during his trip into the background.

On Monday, August seventeenth, the Cromarty smack docked at the London Docks, and Keats set out at once for Hampstead. Mrs. Dilke, who saw him immediately upon his arrival, describes his appearance thus:

> [1] "John Keats arrived here last night, as brown and as shabby as you can imagine; scarcely any shoes left, his jacket all torn at the back, a fur cap, a great plaid, and his knapsack. I cannot tell what he look'd like."

Mrs. Dilke's letter is dated on the nineteenth, and Keats,

[1] *Papers of a Critic*, by Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke.

writing to his sister in a letter which he dates "August 18th," says: "We had a nine days passage and were landed at London Bridge yesterday." There would seem to be some mistake here, and, with Keats's usual vagueness as to the day of the month in mind, I think it quite probable that the fault is his. This difference of dates does, however, leave the exact day of Keats's docking hung in a balance, and I have preferred to let his date stand.

Things were very black for Keats on his return to Hampstead. The sea voyage had done him good, but his throat was still badly inflamed, and in this state he was settling down to nurse the dying Tom; for by that time all hope of Tom's ultimate recovery had been abandoned, it was merely a question of time. John's first duty was to write and apprise Fanny of the change in Tom. This letter, and others written during the Autumn, are tragic with implication. John is always going to ask Abbey to let Fanny come and see Tom, and Abbey's reluctance to permit this is taken for granted. Abbey's attitude was barbarous and unfeeling in the extreme, for we cannot suppose that any hygienic consideration entered into his calculations. He had simply made up his mind that the brothers were a wild couple, and should be kept as much away from their sister as possible. Gross prejudice dictated his opinion, of course; but, as Keats's circle of acquaintances and Abbey's had no single point of contact, there was no one who could enlighten him.

It was unfortunate for Keats that, before he had been a fortnight at Hampstead, Reynolds went off to stay either with, or near, the Drew family in Devonshire. For Keats needed his friends just then, or rather a few days later, when, with the appearance of the August number of *Blackwood's* containing the fourth article on *The Cockney School of Poetry*, the delaying storm of Scotch criticism and vituperation burst upon him in full fury. This fourth paper was devoted entirely to Keats, and to make this

quite clear at the outset, the original motto of the series[1] was truncated to its last three lines, beginning "—— of Keats," etc.

Although the story of the *Blackwood* and *Quarterly* articles has so often been told, I must, perforce, re-tell it here, but I will do so as briefly as possible.

In order to understand the situation, we must realize that, in Keats's day, the great reviews were really *organs* of a party. In our time, it is chiefly the daily papers and the weekly publications which parade a special political bias, but even these never dream of carrying party feeling into the matter of book reviews. It is safe to say that, in this country, at least, an author's political opinions are no bar to his receiving a fair consideration in any paper whatever, except, of course, when his work is a purely political one. Prejudice exists, naturally, but it is a prejudice of individual critics, and since even critics are human and possessed of personal frailties, it could not be otherwise. But the frailest and most irascible of reviewers is free of the charge of measuring his praise or blame according to his author's party leanings. It was quite otherwise in the England of George the third, and remained so for a long time afterwards. Curiously enough, the most important reviews were in the hands of Scotchmen, although one of them was published in London. These were the *Edinburgh Review* of which Constable was the proprietor and Francis Jeffrey the editor; and the *Quarterly*, owned by John Murray and published in London, the editor being William Gifford. The *Edinburgh* was Whig, the *Quarterly* Tory, and each was what it was to the last ditch. Early in 1817, William Blackwood, an enterprising bookseller in Edinburgh and a Tory, conceived the idea of issuing a new monthly magazine which should be at once a spoke in the wheel of his rival Constable, on the spot, and show a more active fighting spirit than the expatriated *Quarterly*. The

[1] See Vol. I, p. 518.

magazine was launched under the title of the *Edinburgh New Monthly Magazine*, but the editors were incompetent, and after six months Blackwood dismissed them and reorganized the magazine with his own name on the title. For new editors, talent stood ready to his hand in the persons of two very clever and astonishingly unscrupulous young men, John Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart. Wilson was the son of a rich Glasgow merchant, and an Oxford graduate, but things had gone ill with him and he was, when Blackwood sought him out, at odds with fortune, as far as money was concerned. Lockhart came of an old Lanarkshire family; he was only twenty-three, but thought himself one hundred on the strength of an Oxford degree and a stay of some weeks in Weimar where he had met Goethe and made one of his circle. This was a great experience, certainly, and Lockhart should have imbibed much wisdom; but what he seems chiefly to have carried back to his native Scotland was an unblushing arrogance, and a profound scorn for any one who could not read Greek and Latin and was unacquainted with current German literature. Each of these promising youths was possessed of the gift of satire, together with a style pleasantly composed of gall and vitriol, and each was totally lacking in imagination and taste. They were delighted to run riot and did, and by doing so stamped themselves forever as first-class cads in the eyes of all posterity. Even Lockhart, the middle-aged Lockhart, beloved son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott and author of the monumental Life of Scott, can never free himself from the stain of the *Cockney School* articles to any one who has read them. No words can exaggerate their unseemly and disgusting quality; even when laughing at their jejune overstatements, wondering how a great reading nation like the British could have taken these ravings seriously, we cannot escape the loathing such writing engenders. I wish I had space in this book to give all four of the *Cockney School* articles

in an appendix, but that cannot be; yet I strongly counsel my readers to seek them out and read them, for no adequate idea of them can be gained by any paraphrase.

To make matters worse, and show that these cocksure, brilliant, and exceedingly stupid young men were also cowards, that each had what the slang of to-day calls a "yellow streak," they signed the articles "Z" and refused to give their names when challenged to do so by Leigh Hunt in the pages of the *Examiner*. The whole transaction is one of the most lamentable in literary history. According to Dilke, Lockhart sincerely repented later, but not until much later; for the sorriest part of the business was the carrying on of the vulgar quarrel, after Keats's death, in a review of Shelley's *Adonais*. What can we think of men who, under the circumstances, could write and print the following?

> "The present story is thus: A *Mr. John Keats*, a young man who had left a decent calling for the melancholy trade of Cockney-poetry, has lately died of a consumption, after having written two or three little books of verses, much neglected by the public. His vanity was probably wrung not less than his purse; for he had it upon the authority of the Cockney Homers and Virgils, that he might become a light to their region at a future time. But all this is not necessary to help a consumption to the death of a poor sedentary man, with an unhealthy aspect, and a mind harassed by the first troubles of versemaking. The New School, however, will have it that he was slaughtered by a criticism of the Quarterly Review. — 'O flesh, how art thou fishified!' — . . . We are not now to defend a publication so well able to defend itself. But the fact is, that the Quarterly finding before it a work at once silly and presumptuous, full of the servile *slang* that Cockaigne dictates to its servitors, and the vulgar indecorums which that Grub Street Empire rejoiceth to applaud, told the truth of the volume, and recommended a change of manners and masters to the scribbler. Keats wrote on; but he wrote

*indecently*, probably in the indulgence of his social propensities."

And this of a dead man!

The article ends, after treating Shelley's poem as only they could treat it, with a parody of *Adonais* entitled *Elegy on my Tom Cat*, which begins:

> "Weep for my Tomcat! all ye Tabbies weep,
> For he is gone at last! Not dead alone,
> In flowery beauty sleepeth he no sleep;
> Like that bewitching youth Endymion!"

Youth is no excuse for such a thing as this. The men who could write and conceive it were ruffians at heart without a spark of decent feeling. But this was long after. I have quoted the passage here because in no other so fully — no, not even in the vile and shameless remarks on Leigh Hunt in the first three papers of the Cockney series — do Wilson and Lockhart reveal what they really were.

The chief reason for the Wilson-Lockhart dislike of Keats was that he was known to be a friend of Hunt's. Hunt was detested for several reasons. Possibly his slighting treatment of Scott in his satire on contemporary writers, *The Feast of the Poets*, had something to do with it, for Scott was idolized by both men; but, without that, the political attitude of the *Examiner* and Hunt's lack of repentance for his plain speaking about the Prince of Wales,[1] even after being jailed on account of it, were enough to incur their hatred. Hunt was to be smashed at all costs; and Keats, as his friend, was to be cleverly chipped, if nothing more.

The chipping process began almost at the opening of the review, where the reader was informed that

> "The Phrenzy of the 'Poems' was bad enough in its way; but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling idiocy of 'Endymion.'"

[1] See Vol. I, p. 65.

That started things with a good slap, and "Z" proceeded, quite innocently and merrily, to give himself away, for, after a sneering comment or two on the *Poems*, he remarks of *Endymion:*

> "The old story of the moon falling in love with a shepherd, so prettily told by a Roman Classic, and so exquisitely enlarged and adorned by one of the most elegant of German poets, has been seized upon by Mr. John Keats, to be done with as might seem good unto the sickly fancy of one who never read a single line either of Ovid or of Wieland."

O Lockhart! Lockhart! Aged twenty-three! With what a proud and strutting air you deployed your erudition! And notice that none of the English poets who treated of the tale are called upon. Indeed, no! Lockhart was at the stage when the exotic is of inestimable worth. Latin, the Gentleman's tongue — Wieland, German literature, the latest craze of travelled youth — closed books both to the middle classes. Keats had read Ovid, even in the original, but Lockhart chose to believe otherwise. Mr. twenty-three-years-old, travelled-into-Germany-and-back John Gibson Lockhart, and blustering, devil-take-the-hindmost coadjutor Wilson, sized the book up at once:

> "His Endymion is not a Greek shepherd, loved by a Grecian goddess; he is merely a young Cockney rhymester, dreaming a phantastic dream at the full of the moon."

This was malice, but "Z" was intelligently enough versed in the Greek classics to make one true observation. "As for Mr. Keats' 'Endymion,'" he says, "it has just as much to do with Greece as it has with 'old Tartary the fierce.'" "Z" meant this as animadversion, but we can see it in quite a different light. I have already dealt with this question in the chapter on *Endymion*.[1]

[1] See Vol. I, p. 346.

There is much quotation in the article, and much ridicule is showered on the poem; but the most objectionable parts of it are the personal reflections, for instance:

> "Mr. Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man. Mr. Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a boy of pretty abilities, which he has done everything in his power to spoil."

In one place, Keats is addressed as "good Johnny Keats," a nomenclature which brought from George, long after,[1] the indignant observation: "John . . . was as much like the *holy Ghost* as *Johnny Keats*." But the crowning exploit of the review was the last paragraph:

> "And now, good-morrow to 'the Muses' son of Promise' . . . We venture to make one small prophecy, that his bookseller will not a second time venture £50 upon anything he can write. It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr. John, back to 'plasters, pills, and ointment boxes,' &c. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been with your poetry."

The wanton cruelty of that passage is extraordinary. All three of the principals, Blackwood, Lockhart, and Wilson, were out for notoriety; the new monthly must make itself noticed by fair means or foul, and this sort of thing produced attention. Yet there were protests. Blackwood's London agents objected to the "Z" articles, and the publisher had to lie himself into their good graces again. Murray, who had taken an interest in the magazine, withdrew his money. Yet still the trio kept on. Even the tragic death of John Scott in a duel with Christie (a duel which was the outgrowth of Scott's reiterated protests against the scurrilities of *Maga*), early in 1821, had little effect.

[1] Letter from George Keats to Dilke. April 29, 1825. Author's Collection.

The *Adonais* review, the most abominable of all, appeared in the number for December, 1821. As to the question of the authorship of the "Z" articles, beyond the fact that they were probably written by one young man and touched up by the other, and that each in turn played critic to the other's composition, we cannot go. But this fourth *Cockney School* paper contains such obvious traces of Lockhart's hand that he certainly must have had a chief part in it. Sir Sidney Colvin has pointed out that both the word "Sangrado," taken from Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, and the allusion to Wieland's *Endymion* point clearly to him, particularly the latter, since although Wieland's *Oberon* was known to English readers through Sotheby's translation, no one connected with *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* is at all likely to have known anything of his untranslated minor works except Lockhart, whose sojourn at Weimar had at least familiarized him with contemporary German poetry.

Late in September, the April number of the *Quarterly* appeared, and in it was the paper which Taylor had seen lying on Gifford's table four months earlier. Gifford, whom Sir Sidney Colvin aptly calls "the acrid and deformed pedant Gifford," was an implacable partizan, conservative and narrow in his outlook on literature, entirely given over to the good old way in everything. The man to whom he had consigned *Endymion* for review, is now known to have been John Wilson Croker, as hide-bound a formalist as himself. No man less capable of understanding the fresh luxuriance of *Endymion* could have been found. The result was as might have been expected. The *Quarterly* article (unsigned, by the way; these prudent champions of the good old way preferred to let off their blunderbusses behind the safe screen of anonymity) began with a frank admission that the author of it had been unable to read beyond the First Book of *Endymion*, of which he could make neither head nor tail. The second paragraph ingratiatingly continued:

> "It is not that Mr. Keats, (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody,) it is not, we say, that the author has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius — he has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called Cockney poetry; which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language."

So the door was opened a crack and the skeleton peeped through. The Tory feared the Whig. The great Tory publishing house of Murray feared the slightest spark of Whigism so much that through its mouthpiece, the long-established Tory organ, the *Quarterly*, it could stoop to crush a young poet's honest work, and in so doing inconvenience the small but tenacious firm of Taylor and Hessey. Taking Keats's Preface, Croker turned Keats's pathetic humility into a petard for his own hoisting. The poet himself acknowledged the book to be immature; he was young and hoped to do better — his own words convicted him! Croker was merciless. His literary gods were assailed. "There is hardly a complete couplet enclosing a complete idea in the whole book," the scandalized pedant roared. This was intolerable, and he proceeded to quote and quote again; to string up rhymes of which he did not approve, for ridicule; to point out lines whose scansion eluded his metronomic ear; to list Keats's verbal inventions and make fun of them; in short, to prove, with the infinite cunning of unrelated lines, phrases, and words, that the poem was an utterly foolish and contemptible bit of childish effrontery. Not once was he honest enough to give a single example of the merits he had admitted: powers of language, rays of fancy, gleams of genius. These were left with their bare mention. The paper ended as it began, with a sneer:

> "If any one should be bold enough to purchase this 'Poetic Romance,' and so much more patient, than our-

> selves, as to get beyond the first book, and so much more fortunate as to find a meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success; we shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair, and endeavour to make all due amends to Mr. Keats and to our readers."

It will at once be seen that the *Quarterly*, while not descending to the unpardonable personalities which disgraced *Blackwood's*, had in reality published the more dangerous article. The excesses of *Blackwood's*, the tone of the whole review, these things could not help but carry their own antidotes with them. Evident malice can — nay, must — be, in a measure, discounted. Irony, on the other hand, has no button on its foil. And the *Quarterly* had put its finger on a real weakness. Keats's versification was not always beyond reproach, his coinings were not always felicitous and there were too many of them. The *Quarterly* could not be entirely disagreed with, all that could be said was that there was another side which Croker would not — indeed, I think, could not — see.

A third review, in some ways the worst of the three, had come out in the June number of the *British Critic*, but, considering the dilatory appearance of periodicals in those days, Keats probably did not see it until his return from Scotland. Of this publication, its conductors and point of view, that compendium of useful knowledge, Leigh's *New Picture of London*, 1819, says: "This work is conducted by persons of the established church, and on the orthodox principles of that respectable body." The author of the review of *Endymion* is unknown, of his quality we can guess by a couple of quotations. His charming method of dealing with the poem is to tell the story, interpolating in his text various expressions taken from Keats which he dislikes, thus making the whole read as nonsensically as possible; and to this form of ridicule he adds such judicious comments as his natural refinement suggests. Here is an illustration, the parentheses are his:

> "it seems that one evening when the sun had done driving 'his snorting four,' 'there blossom'd suddenly a magic bed of sacred ditamy,' (Qu. dimity?) and he looked up to the 'lidless-eyed train of planets,' where he saw 'a completed form of all completeness,' 'with gordian'd locks and pearl round ears,' and kissed all these till he fell into a 'stupid sleep,' from which he was roused by 'a gentle creep,' (N.B. Mr. Tiffin is the ablest bug-destroyer of our days,) to look at some 'upturn'd gills of dying fish.'"

This exquisite humour is carried on throughout, the last paragraph reading:

> "We do most solemnly assure our readers that this poem, containing 4074 lines, is printed on very nice hot-pressed paper, and sold for nine shillings, by a very respectable London bookseller. Moreover, that the author has put his name in the title page, and told us, that though he is something between man and boy, he means by and by to be 'plotting and fitting himself for verses fit to live.' We think it necessary to add that it is all written in rhyme, and, for the most part, (when there are syllables enough) in the heroic couplet."

Two of the most important reviews had spoken, the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's*. The *British Critic* had not quite the same rank, it was merely the terrier yapping beside the big dogs. But where was the Whig rival, Constable's *Edinburgh Review*, whose editor was the temperate and intellectual Jeffrey? Silent, totally silent. No notice whatever was taken of *Endymion* in the *Edinburgh Review* until two years later.

Seldom has any author been called upon to face a more annihilating trio of reviews than these that Keats read, one after the other, during the first weeks of his return to Hampstead. To say that he was not cut to the quick by them, would be both foolish and false; but to believe that he was in the least crushed because of them is to misunderstand his character and misconstrue his attitude. He

winced, but never for a moment did he flinch. No man likes to be called a "starved apothecary," or "an amiable but infatuated bardling," but that Keats ever wavered under these sneers has been long since proved not to have been so. There is perfect sense in his remark that "what Reviewers can put a hindrance to must be — a nothing — or mediocre which is worse." He tells George that such articles are "a mere matter of the moment," and adds that the attempt to crush him in the *Quarterly* has only brought him into more notice.

Such flaming attacks were almost sure to bring rejoinders. On Saturday, October third, a letter appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*. This letter averred that its author knew nothing of Keats, but was moved by the "malice and gross injustice" displayed by the *Quarterly* toward him to put in a word of protest. Led to read the poem by the article in question, the writer, having done so, announces that he dares, "appeal to the taste and judgement of your readers, that beauties of the highest order may be found in almost every page." After a few perfectly just criticisms, which do but make his encomiums the more weighty, the writer ends with some very sharp digs at certain well-known critics (suggested, but not named) who might have written the review, among others, funnily enough, Croker himself, to whom he advises a comparison between *Endymion* and the *Battle of Talevera*. Since Croker was the author of the *Battle*, this was a bit of sheer, heart-winning audacity, and endears the mythical "J. S." to us forever. The article was signed "J. S." but who wrote it remains a mystery. Both Keats and Taylor declared they did not know. It could not have been Severn, he was dangerously ill with a "typhous fever" (probably typhoid) at the time; John Scott has been suggested as the author, but he was still abroad; James Smith is a possible speculation, but has nothing to substantiate it. No, we do not know the author — as yet, at least.

On the following Thursday, the *Morning Chronicle* published another letter, this time signed "R. B." and dated "Temple." "R. B." was also declared unknown by both Keats and Taylor, and no hint as to who he was has ever been discovered. I have found in the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library a copy of this letter, but I fear that proves nothing, for Woodhouse may simply have copied it from the paper. It is worth remarking, however, that he does not seem to have copied the letter signed "J. S." "R. B.'s" letter was a manly backing up of "J. S.," who had anticipated the "few remarks" which he (R. B.) had intended to make. To prove his point that "the Critic who could pass over such beauties as these lines contain" is not "very implicitly to be relied upon," "R. B." appends to his article some long quotations from *Endymion*, all taken from the First Book, as the *Quarterly* reviewer had professed to have read nothing else. These quotations amount in all to about fifty lines, twenty-two of which are taken from the *Hymn to Pan*.

When the last letter came out, good, thoughtful, sympathetic Hessey sent them both to Keats. Keats, in his answer, shows exactly how the whole circumstance was affecting him:

> "I cannot but feel indebted to those gentlemen who have taken my part. As for the rest, I begin to get a little acquainted with my own strength and weakness. — Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critique on his own Works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict — and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine. J. S. is perfectly right in regard to the slip-shod Endymion. That it is so is no fault of mine. No! — though it may sound a little paradoxical. It is as good as I had power to make it — by myself. Had I been

> nervous about its being a perfect piece, and with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble — I will write independently. — I have written independently *without Judgement*. I may write independently, and *with Judgement* hereafter. The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself. In 'Endymion,' I leaped headlong into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice. I was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest."

So Keats looked into and judged himself, and who shall say that the judgment was not wise and just!

Keats's friends were, of course, if not surprised at these vicious attacks, nevertheless utterly incensed. Bailey was introduced to Blackwood somewhere, and on Blackwood's informing him that, on his return from London, he had been very sorry to find the attack on Keats in his magazine, Bailey flatly told him that it was "infamous." But Bailey was not content to stop there. He tried to get Blackwood to let him publish a defence of Keats, but naturally could not do so. Then he wrote an article attacking *Blackwood's* and sent it to Constable for insertion in his *Edinburgh Magazine* (not to be confounded with the *Edinburgh Review*), but this was returned to him without a word. Bailey, by this time discouraged, tore up his article, but begged Taylor to tell Keats what his intentions had been.

Reynolds, in Devonshire, had better luck. He wrote a long paper, attacking the *Quarterly* and lauding Keats, and got it published in *The Alfred, West of England Journal and General Advertiser* on Tuesday, October sixth. This article, somewhat abridged, Hunt reprinted the following Sunday in the *Examiner*, with a few prefatory remarks by

himself. Hunt has been accused of pusillanimity in not coming to Keats's rescue more stoutly at this time, and after Keats's death he himself regretted that he had not done more. But what good would it have been? Hunt could only have made things worse, and then, too, he was not enthusiastic over *Endymion*, and more than a little piqued that he had not been consulted about it. On the whole, I imagine that the wisest thing he could do was just what he did — reprint Reynolds's article and leave things there. Since the article was not signed, it had all the weight of a fresh opinion hailing from another part of the country.

Nothing can exaggerate the cruelty of the reviews, nor the unfortunate chance that Keats should have had to undergo them just when he did. Tom's illness was misery sufficient to darken all Keats's sky. Besides this, he was suffering from a mental tumult of opposing desires. It is not a little difficult to give a correct picture of Keats's mind during this Autumn. We must follow no thread of his thought without at the same time keeping an eye on the other threads. Keats lived his days as they came, fighting his difficulties as they arose, now absorbed in his own state of mind, then suddenly lifted out of himself by reflecting for a time on poetry, and again fuming at the reviews and planning "great verse" which should, in no very distant future, confute his enemies; yet, all the time, over him, surrounding him whichever way he turned, pressing down upon him, was the inescapable knowledge that Tom was dying, dying, leaving him, and that every hour spent away from Tom, every thought which had not its core in Tom, was in some sort a treason, a wasting of precious moments the flight of which he could not stay. With Brown still in Scotland, and Reynolds in Devonshire, Keats's chief props during the early Autumn were undoubtedly the Dilkes. Then Dilke, who had not been well for some time, went off to Brighton, and Haydon,

whose eyes had been troubling him very much, also departed to visit his sister at Bridgewater. The old group seemed quite disintegrated. Keats must often have felt that he was living in some ghastly nightmare, where all the old familiar things of habit had suddenly grown strange and unreal. If the streets looked the same, his purposes as he walked along them were quite altered; the cheery lodging at Well Walk was inconceivably changed. No George, and only a poor, tortured semblance of Tom to greet him when he came back from a walk, or from town — Tom, to whom he could not vent his own sufferings as he had been wont to do all his life. We get a very clear glimpse of his condition in a passage from a letter which he wrote to Dilke late in September. After an heroic attempt to be his old nonsensical self for a page, he breaks out:

> "I wish I could say Tom was any better. His identity presses upon me so all day that I am obliged to go out — and although I intended to have given some time to study alone, I am obliged to write and plunge into abstract images to ease myself of his countenance, his voice, and feebleness — so that I live now in a continual fever. It must be poisonous to life, although I feel well."

That abstract images, either his own or other people's often failed to ease him can be seen by an annotation in his folio Shakespeare, where, in Act III, Scene IV, of King Lear, the words, "poore Tom," are underlined and the date, "Sunday evening, Oct[r] 4, 1818," written beside them.

In the same letter to Dilke, he casually mentions that

> "Rice is in town. I have not seen him, nor shall I for some time, as my throat has become worse after getting well, and I am determined to stop at home till I am quite well."

On the same day, he wrote to Reynolds, a letter full of generous rejoicing at his friend's happiness. From this letter, and from Keats's telling Dilke that he hears that

Reynolds is "almost over-happy," I suppose that Miss Drew had at last consented to a formal engagement. Here is what Keats says about Reynolds and about himself:

> "Believe me I have rather rejoiced at your happiness than fretted at your silence. Indeed I am grieved on your account that I am not at the same time happy. But I conjure you to think at present of nothing but pleasure — 'Gather the rose, &c' — gorge the honey of life. I pity you as much that it cannot last forever, as I do myself now drinking bitters. Give yourself up to it — you cannot help it — and I have a consolation in thinking so. I never was in love — yet the voice and shape of a Woman has haunted me these two days — at such a time, when the relief, the feverous relief of Poetry seems a much less crime. This morning Poetry has conquered — I have relapsed into those abstractions which are my only life — I feel escaped from a new strange and threatening sorrow — and I am thankful for it. There is an awful warmth about my heart like a load of Immortality.
>
> Poor Tom — that woman — and Poetry were ringing changes in my senses. Now I am in comparison happy — I am sensible this will distress you — you must forgive me."

Already, before he left Scotland, Keats, as we have seen, was considerably occupied with the thought of women; how they stood to him, and if they really stood anywhere at all in his economy. Now, suddenly, the negative turns positive. A woman swings across his vision, and he is conscious of a distinct sense of attraction. This is disconcerting, and in his present situation such a thought appears like sacrilege to him. Also, he is afraid, distinctly afraid, of what a real passion would mean to him. This is not a real passion, he has the perspicacity to realize that immediately. This is to be no more than a passing excitement; but, for the moment, even as he sees behind it, as it were, his nerves respond acutely to its stimulus, so that

the memory of this woman shakes and confuses him by its implication of a possibility.

The woman who passes so kaleidoscopically across Keats's destiny was a young Anglo-Indian, Miss Jane Cox, a niece of Mrs. Reynolds. Keats tells the whole story to George and Georgiana a few days later, when, we may guess, a little more perspective had been added to the original effect:

> "She is not a Cleopatra, but she is at least a Charmian. She has a rich eastern look; she has fine eyes and fine manners. When she comes into a room she makes an impression the same as the Beauty of a Leopardess . . . I always find myself more at ease with such a woman; the picture before me always gives me a life and animation which I cannot possibly feel with anything inferior. I am at such times too much occupied in admiring to be awkward or on a tremble. I forget myself entirely because I live in her. You will by this time think I am in love with her; so before I go any further I will tell you I am not — she kept me awake one Night as a tune of Mozart's might do . . . I believe tho' she has faults — the same as Charmian and Cleopatra might have had. Yet she is a fine thing speaking in a worldly way: for there are two distinct tempers of mind in which we judge of things — the worldly, theatrical and pantomimical; and the unearthly, spiritual and ethereal — in the former Buonaparte, Lord Byron and this Charmian hold the first place in our Minds; in the latter, John Howard, Bishop Hooker rocking his child's cradle, and you my dear Sister are the conquering feelings. As a Man in the world I love the rich talk of a Charmian; as an eternal Being I love the thought of you. I should like her to ruin me, and I should like you to save me."

In spite of her rich talk and leopardess-like bearing, Miss Cox had not the qualities essential to the making of a deep impression upon Keats. The dual love which he unconsciously craved, that longing for a lover who should also be a mother, that necessity for believing in the spirit even

while adoring the flesh, all this girt Keats as with a magically tempered armour. Miss Cox had no weapon to pierce such metal as this, and of her we hear no more. But, even as it listed, the wind of sexual passion was preparing to blow again.

To follow Keats's life as he lived it during these Autumn months, it is constantly necessary to break off one train of thought and pursue another. Tom, Poetry, and Woman — these are the things which shared Keats's life at this time. He knew that health to him meant having poetry to write, and writing it. If his mind must wander from Tom, even for a moment, poetry was the only thing which carried a certain justification with it. There was no infidelity here; Tom loved his poetry as much as he did. And so the changes ring back to Tom.

Luckily for Keats, there were outside things which must be attended to. Why, in this very number of the *Quarterly*, there was a review of Birkbeck's two books on America. If Keats saw it, he must have been struck with the superb irony of circumstance which put it there.

One thing the reviews had done. They had shown Keats how firmly his friends and his publishers were prepared to stand by him. On one occasion, dining with Hessey, Keats seems to have said something to the effect that everything had been written already, and therefore what was the use of writing any more. Woodhouse, who was present, was a good deal worried at Keats's remark, and, taking *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* into consideration, he could not wonder at it. So distressed was he, that he sat down and wrote to Keats. This letter has never, so far as I can discover, been printed, although it has been postulated from Keats's answer. A second unpublished document contains Woodhouse's comments on this answer, and as Keats's letter and the two Woodhouse documents together make an interesting and unrecorded series, I shall give extracts from all three.

Writing from his rooms in the Temple, under the date of October twenty-first, Woodhouse says:

[1] "My Dear Keats,

Whilst in the country, from whence I am but lately returned, I met with that malicious, but weak & silly article on Endymion in the last Quarterly Review. God help the Critic, whoever he be! He is as ignorant of the rudiments of his own craft as of the Essentials of true Poetry.

That his *very regrettable*[2] censures may have the effect of scaring from the perusal of the work some of the 'Dandy' readers, male & female, who love to be spared the trouble of judging for themselves, is to be expected. But with men of sense, (as the example of J. S. in the Chronicle, proves) the effect must be the reverse . . . for the reviewer in his undiscriminating stupidity, has laid his finger of contempt upon passages of such beauty, that no one with a spark of poetic feeling can read them without a desire to know more of the poem. — 'If,' said a friend of mine at Bath, who had seen the critique, but not the work, 'these are the worst passages, what must the best be' . . . But enough of such cobbling, carping, decasyllabic, finger-scanning criticaster. — His hour of 'brief authority' must be nigh over. His blindness will soon work its own way into the earth. —

The appearance of this 'critical morsel,' however, determines me to address you on the subject of your late conversation at Hessey's, on which I have often since reflected, and never without a degree of pain — I may have misconceived you; but I understood you to say, you thought there was now nothing original to be written in poetry; that its riches were already exhausted, & all its beauties forestalled — & That you should, consequently, write no more. I cannot assent to your premises, and I most earnestly deprecate your conclusion. — For my part I believe most sincerely, that the wealth of poetry is unexhausted and inexhaustible — The ideas derivable to us from our senses singly & in their various combinations with

[1] From a draft of the original letter made by Woodhouse. Author's Collection.

[2] This word is problematic, as it could not be clearly read.

each other store the mind with endless images of natural beauty . . . It is then for the Poëta factus, the imitator of others, who sings only as has been sung, to say that our measure of poetry is full, & that there is nothing new to be written, thus charging upon 'most innocent nature' a dearth existing only in his own dull brain — But the poëta natus, the true born son of Genius, who creates for himself the world in which his own fancy ranges, who culls from it fair forms of truth beauty & purity & apparels them in hues chosen by himself should hold a different language — he need never fear that the treasury he draws from can be exhausted, nor despair of always being able to make an original selection.

It is true that in this age; the mass are not of soul to conceive of themselves or even to apprehend when presented to them, the truly & simply beautiful of poetry. — A taste vitiated by the sweetmeats & kickshaws of the past century may be the reason for this. Still fewer of this generation are capable of properly embodying the high conceptions they may have — and of the last number few are the individuals who do not allow their fire and originality to be damped by the apprehensions of shallow censures from the grouching & the 'cold-hearted.' 'In these evil days however, and these Evil tongues' (in the spirit of truth & sincerity & not of flattery I say it) I believe there has appeared one bard who 'preserves his vessel' in purity independence & honor — who judges of the beautiful for himself, careless who thinks with him — who pursues his own selfappointed & approved course right onward — who stoops not from his flight to win sullied breath from the multitude . . . and shall such a one, upon whom anxious eyes are fixed . . . be dismayed at the yelpings of the tuneless, the curious, the malignant or the undiscerning? or shall he fall into the worse error of supposing that there is left no corner of the universal heaven of poetry unvisited by Wing? Shall he subtract himself from the caputations[1] of his country; and leave its ear & its soul to be soothed only by the rhymers & the coupleteers? Shall he let 'so fair a house fall to decay' — and shall he give the land which let

[1] This seems to be the word Woodhouse wrote, but it is very indistinct.

Chatterton & K. White die of unkindness and neglect — but which yet retained the grace to weep over their ashes, no opportunity of redeeming its Character & paying the vast debt it owes to Genius? — Your conduct, my Dear Keats, must give these Questions an answer. —

'Know thine own work & reverence the lyre!' —

The world, I hope & trust, is not quite so dead dull and ungrateful as you may have apprehended — or as a few malevolent spirits may have given you reason to imagine. It contains, I know, many who have a warm 'affection for the cause of stedfast Genius toiling gallantly,' — many who, tho' personally unknown to you, look with the eye of hope & anticipation to your future course — but very few who in sincere wishes for your welfare, & passion for your fame, exceed, Dear Keats,

Yours most truly,
RICHD WOODHOUSE."

We get a very clear idea of Woodhouse from that letter. The man himself is there, with his keen literary interest, his insight, his loyalty, and his egregious habit of constant quotation. Woodhouse is a bit stilted now and then, very much the lettered dilettante, but such a good, steady, honest soul looks at us through the ornamental phrases that we forget to be annoyed by them, and notice only the evident sincerity which no clap-trap of expression can conceal. Keats was never intimate with Woodhouse in the sense that he was intimate with Reynolds, or Bailey, or Brown, but Woodhouse must have been a comfort to him in many ways, he must often have warmed himself at Woodhouse's enthusiasm, even though Woodhouse's insatiable curiosity in regard to his work undoubtedly galled him at times. But this letter came at the crucial moment, when Keats needed just the kind of encouragement and solid backing that Woodhouse gave. He answered within the week (his reply is postmarked "OC. 27, 1818. 12 o'Clock") in a letter which is so important that, in spite of its being well known, I do not feel justified in giving otherwise than entire.

[1] "My dear Woodhouse.

Your letter gave me great satisfaction, more on account of its friendliness than any relish for that matter in it which is accounted so acceptable to the 'genus irritabile.' The best answer I can give you is in a clerklike manner to make some observations on two principal points which seem to point like indices into the midst of the whole pro and con about genius, and views, and atchievements and ambition and cætera. 1st. As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort, of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical Sublime; which is a thing per se, and stands alone), it is not itself — it has no self — It is every thing and nothing — It has no character — it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. — It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence because he has no Identity — he is continually in for and filling some other body. The Sun, — the Moon, — the Sea, and men and women, who are creatures of impulse, are poetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute; the poet has none, no identity — he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures. — If then he has no self, and if I am a poet, where is the wonder that I should say that I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant have been cogitating on the Characters of Saturn and Ops? It is a wretched thing to confess; but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical Nature — how can it, when I have no Nature? When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then, not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated — not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery

[1] Quoted from the original letter. Author's Collection.

of Children. I know not whether I make myself wholly understood: I hope enough so to let you see that no dependence is to be placed on what I said that day.

In the second place, I will speak of my views, and of the life I purpose to myself. I am ambitious of doing the world some good: if I should be spared, that may be the work of maturer years — in the interval I will assay to reach to as high a summit in poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of poems to come bring the blood frequently into my forehead. All I hope is, that I may not lose all interest in human affairs — that the solitary Indifference I feel for applause, even from the finest spirits, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will. I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every Morning, and no eye ever shine upon them. But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself, but from some Character in whose soul I now live.

I am sure, however, that this next sentence is from myself — I feel your anxiety, good opinion, and friendship, in the highest degree, and am

Yours most sincerely,
JOHN KEATS."

There is some exaggeration here, and more than a little fatigue. Keats was bearing too much, and it was telling upon him. The identities of people do not so press upon a person in health, even though he be a poet. That Tom's identity should press upon him constantly at this time, is no wonder; it could not have been otherwise. But that this impinging of other personalities on his should be carried into a drawing-room of casual acquaintance, shows that Keats was all fagged out, with brain, and nerves, and body harassed and jangling. The marvel is that he stood the strain as well as he did. And there is a great deal of truth in his remarks. The poet differs from the "poetic" person in just this power to lose himself in his creations.

The "poetic" person is a sentimentalist, he refers all things to himself and finds them of importance in proportion to the sensations they arouse in him; the poet is concerned with his creations for themselves, and forgets his own personality in the effort to imbue them with such as are proper to his conception of them. We have seen before how puzzled Keats was by his own changes of mood. In referring to them as belonging to some other personality, he is merely seeking to satisfy himself by inventing a reason for them. But the reason does not quite hit the mark, although it glances off the edge of it. We shall be wiser not to follow Keats's argument with too implicit a faith. Of his sincerity in writing it, there can be no question. He had persuaded himself that he had found an explanation, while in reality the clue lay in the complexity of his character alone.

Woodhouse appears to have expended a good deal of thought on the exact meaning of Keats's words, taken in connection with the man as he knew him. Leaving on one side, with admirable perspicuity, the relation of Keats's imaginative life to his expressed intentions, thus refusing any agreement to Keats's chief contention, he nevertheless realized and traced the positive facts which Keats had assayed to explain. The document in which Woodhouse set down his conclusions is without superscription of any sort, so it may have been merely one of his many notes on Keats; on the other hand, it is quite probable that Woodhouse was writing to enlighten Taylor, to whom he very probably showed Keats's letter. Woodhouse's reflections, in part, are:

> [1] "I believe him to be right with regard to his own Poetical Character — And I perceive clearly the distinction he draws between himself & those of the Wordsworth School. There are gradations in Poetry and in Poets."

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

Here Woodhouse describes at some length the various kinds of poets, and continues:

> "The highest order of Poet will not only possess all the above powers but will have so high an imag$^{n}$ that he will be able to throw his own soul into any object he sees or imagines, so as to see feel be sensible of & express all that the object itself wo$^{d}$ see feel be sensible of or express. He will speak out of that object so that His own self will with the Exception of the mechanical part be 'annihilated.' — and it is of the excess of this power that I suppose Keats to speak, when he says he has no identity. As a poet, and when the fit is upon him, this is true. And it is a fact that he does by the power of his Imag$^{n}$ create ideal personages substances & Powers — that he lives for a time in their souls or Essences or ideas — and that occasionally so intensely as to lose consciousness of what is round him. We all do the same in a degree when we fall into a reverie."

Here an asterisk brings in a footnote, as follows:

> "The power of his Imag$^{n}$ is apparent in Every page of his Endym$^{n}$ — & He has affirmed that he can conceive of a billiard Ball that it may have a sense of delight from its own roundness, smoothness & volubility & the rapidity of its motion."

Then comes a paragraph of recapitulation, after which Woodhouse goes on:

> "This being his idea of the Poetical Character — he may well say that a poet has no identity — as a Man he must have Identity. But as a poet he need not. And in this Sense a poet is 'the most unpoetical of God's creatures.' for his soul has no distinctive characteristic — it cannot be itself made the subj$^{t}$ of Poetry that is another persons soul can not be thrown into the poet's for there is no identity or personal impulse to be acted upon!
>
> Shaksp$^{r}$ was a poet of the kind above ment$^{d}$ — and he was perhaps the only one besides Keats who possessed this power in an extra degree . . .

> L[d] Byron does not come up to this character. He can certainly conceive & describe a dark accomplished vilain in love. & a female tender and true who loves him. Or a sated & palled sensualist misanthrope & Deist. But here his power ends. The true poet can not only conceive this — but can assume any character Essence idea or substance at pleasure. & he has this imaginative faculty not in a limited manner, but in full universality.
>
> Let us pursue Speculation on these Matters: & we shall soon be bro[t] to believe in the truth of every Syllable of Keats's letter, taken as a description of himself and his own ideas and feelgs."

The chief thing worth preserving in this commentary is Keats's observation on the billiard-ball. It is perfectly characteristic and highly important. What the psychologists call "organic reaction" is here present to a superlative degree. "Organic reaction" is the sudden sensation of physical participation in the action of an object seen, or proper to a word pronounced. For instance, the word "wind" will give a person with strong organic reactions a sense of being buffeted and blown upon by a high wind. Keats, in watching the billiard-ball, felt in himself, distinctly and coercingly, the sensations which he imagined that a billiard-ball must have. The word "volubility" is arresting; it is allied to the "intellect" of the water-fall at Ambleside.[1] That Keats's reactions were organic, is obvious to every careful student of his poetry, but here is an evidence of it which we are greatly indebted to Woodhouse for having preserved.

If only a fraction of Woodhouse's letter were taken up with the "tarterly" *Quarterly* (to borrow Byron's expression), and Keats in his answer ignored the subject entirely, it was, nevertheless, very much present in the minds of all the set. What was to be done? Clearly the best response to such malice was to publish again and at

[1] See Vol. II, p. 23.

once. It had been immediately after the chilly reception of the *Poems* that Keats had begun *Endymion*. But for use at once, what was there? Nothing, really, but the *Pot of Basil* and a few sonnets and short lyrics. The *Pot of Basil* was not only done, but copied out fair. In his letter of the twenty-first of September to Reynolds, then in Devonshire, Keats had said: "Had I known you would have set out so soon I could have sent you the 'Pot of Basil' for I had copied it out ready." Reynolds returned to town early in October, but it was not so easy for him and Keats to meet as it had been hitherto. Reynolds, as articled clerk to a solicitor, was pretty well tied down, and Keats could only leave Tom very occasionally, probably just when some friend was on hand to spell him. By hook or by crook, however, Reynolds managed to get out to Well Walk, and brought back with him the *Pot of Basil*. This was on Thursday, October thirteenth, and the next morning, in the fullness of his heart over the poem, he wrote a long letter to Keats. It is not difficult to see why Keats was so fond of Reynolds after reading this letter.

[1] "My dear Keats.

I was most delighted at seeing you yesterday, — for I hardly knew how I was to meet with you, situated as you are, and confined as I am. I wish I could have stayed longer with you. As to the Poem I am of all things anxious that you should publish it, for its completeness will be a full answer to all the ignorant malevolence of cold lying Scotchmen and stupid Englishmen. The overweening struggle to *oppress* you only shows the world that so much of Endeavour cannot be directed to Nothing. Men do not set their muscles, and strain their sinews to break a straw. I am confident, Keats, that the Pot of Basil hath that simplicity and quiet pathos, which are of sure sovereignty over all hearts. I must say that it would delight me to have you prove yourself to the world, what we know you

[1] Given, slightly abridged, from a transcription of the original letter made by Professor Edward S. Burgess of Hunter College.

to be; — to have you annul the Quarterly Review, by the best of all answers.

When I see you, I will give you the Poem . . . And let us have the Tale put forth, now that an interest is aroused. One or two of your Sonnets you might print, I am sure . . . You will remember that we were [to] pu[t out][1] together. I give over all intention and you ought to be alone. I can never write anything now — my mind is taken the other way; — But I shall set my heart on having you, high, as you ought to be. Do *you* get Fame, — and I shall have it in being your affectionate and steady friend . . .

Your ever affectionate

J. H. Reynolds."

Keats wanted to write, longed to write, but how could he, with Tom in the state that he was, and his own mind torn by so many conflicting importunities? He seems to have made an effort to begin *Hyperion*; we see from the reference to Saturn and Ops in the letter to Woodhouse that the poem was beginning to "come down," was taking some sort of shape to him. Poems often float in a sort of nebulous haze — bright, but without contour; alluring, yet indefinite — just beyond the sphere of words. So undoubtedly *Hyperion* hung, yet what of it he got on paper during the Autumn we do not know. Very little, I imagine, and that little will, I believe, be found in the *Vision of Hyperion*, not in *Hyperion* proper. The reason for my belief I shall state in a later chapter. The only other poems which we know definitely to have been written before Tom's death, were a translation of a sonnet by Ronsard, sent to Reynolds in the letter of September twenty-first,[2] and a little *Prophecy* for George and Georgiana's expected child.

Of the first, little need be said. Keats called it a "free translation," and explained to Reynolds that the reason

[1] A slight tear, and a red seal, make the words bracketed conjectural.

[2] Sir Sidney Colvin says that the letter is dated "about Sept. 22." Buxton Forman gives the date, by inference, as "21 or 22 September."

why the sonnet lacked its final couplet was because "I had not the original by me when I wrote it, and did not recollect the purport of the last lines." As a matter of fact, the translation adheres very closely to the original, which, considering that Keats was remembering Ronsard's lines merely, shows how much they had impressed him. Woodhouse had lent him Ronsard's poems, and his opinion of them was that they had "great Beauties."

The *Prophecy* was sent in a long letter to George and his wife, written at intervals during October. It is ushered in by one of the very few passages of political discussion to be found in Keats's letters. I quote a part of it:

> "... as for Politics they are in my opinion only sleepy because they will soon be too wide awake. Perhaps not — for the long and continued Peace of England itself has given us notions of personal safety which are likely to prevent the reestablishment of our national Honesty. There is, of a truth, nothing manly or sterling in any part of the Government. There are many Madmen in the Country, I have no doubt, who would like to be beheaded on Tower Hill merely for the sake of éclat; there are many Men like Hunt who from a principle of taste would like to see things go on better, there are many like Sir F. Burdett who like to sit at the head of political dinners, — but there are none prepared to suffer in obscurity for their Country. The motives of our worst men are Interest and of our best Vanity. We have no Milton, no Algernon Sidney — Governors in these days lose the title of Man in exchange for that of Diplomat and Minister. We breathe in a sort of Officinal Atmosphere. All the departments of Government have strayed far from Simplicity, which is the greatest of strength. There is as much difference in this respect between the present Government and Oliver Cromwell's as there is between the 12 Tables of Rome and the volumes of Civil Law which were digested by Justinian ... Notwithstanding the part which the Liberals take in the Cause of Napoleon I cannot but think he has done more harm to the life of Liberty than any one else could have

> done: not that the divine right Gentlemen have done or intend to do any good — no, they have taken a Lesson from him, and will do all the further harm he would have done without any of the good. The worst thing he has done is, that he has taught them how to organize their monstrous armies."

This most temperate speech is certainly not the outpouring of a frenzied radical. Yet *Blackwood's* had implied as much for Keats by saying: "We had almost forgot to mention that Keats belongs to the Cockney School of Politics, as well as the Cockney School of Poetry." Since, in the eyes of "Z," the Cockney School of Politics meant Leigh Hunt daring to point the finger of sarcastic comment at the sacrosanct person of Royalty in the shape of George, Prince of Wales ("Prinny," as Hunt's sympathizers called him), and cheerfully going to prison as a corollary, the inference was that he, and Keats along with him, were dangerous radicals who should, at all costs, be suppressed. That the effort at suppression at least was real, we have seen only too clearly. I have lately run across a remark of Hazlitt's which is so little known and so pertinent to Keats's words that I will give it here. In 1824, Hazlitt was abroad, and in Rome he met an old friend, long absent from England, who inquired of him the state of things at home. "I told him," says Hazlitt, "that public opinion in England was at present governed by half a dozen miscreants, who undertook to bait, hoot, and worry every man out of his country, or into an obscure grave, with lies and nicknames, who was not prepared to take the political sacrament of the day, and use his best endeavours (he and his friends) to banish the last traces of freedom, truth, and honesty from the land. 'To be direct and honest is not safe.' To be a Reformer, the friend of a Reformer, or the friend's friend of a Reformer, is as much as a man's peace, reputation, or even life is worth. Answer if it is not so, pale shade of Keats, or living mummy of William Gifford!"[1]

[1] *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy*, by William Hazlitt. 1826.

Keats was a friend of reformers, reformers who were so, like Hunt, "from a principle of taste," but that was enough. Keats was no more blind to the state of affairs than was Hazlitt, but active participation in such things was not his part; he commented in private, but said no word in print, as he might easily have done through the medium of the *Examiner*. That he felt no desire to air his views in public gives the measure of his interest in such subjects, which was, in truth, very slight.

I have wandered far from the *Prophecy*, yet this poem was the direct result of his political cogitations, for, following the passage I have quoted, Keats gives his opinion of America, a country of which he knew nothing and the idea of which distinctly repelled him. This is what he says:

> "Dilke, whom you know to be a Godwin perfectability Man, pleases himself with the idea that America will be the country to take up the human intellect where England leaves off — I differ there with him greatly. A country like the United States, whose greatest men are Franklins and Washingtons, will never do that. They are great Men doubtless, but how are they to be compared to those our country-men Milton and the two Sydneys? The one is a philosophical Quaker full of mean and thrifty maxims, the other sold the very Charger who had taken him through all his Battles. Those Americans are great, but they are not sublime Man — the humanity of the United States can never reach the sublime. Birkbeck's mind is too much in the American style — you must endeavour to infuse a little Spirit of another sort into the settlement . . . If I had a prayer to make for any great good, next to Tom's recovery, it should be that one of your Children should be the first American Poet. I have a great mind to make a prophecy, and they say prophecies work out their own fulfillment —"

Here follows the poem beginning:

> "Tis 'the witching time of night'"

and ending:

"Little Child
O' th' western wild
A Poet now or never!"

Unfortunately it was "never." American literature can boast no poet of the name of Keats, and the name itself is now on the road to extinction.[1] The poem was clearly an impromptu, and as such is pleasant. The idea of a flaming lyre perching on the top of the cradle, which no one dare touch, but which the child seizes and plays upon, is a pretty conceit.

The Ronsard sonnet and the *Prophecy* hardly counted, however, and *Hyperion* simply would not march. Keats tells George that he is going to start on a prose tale, as his mind is too active to remain idle, and he has "too many interruptions to a train of feeling to be able to write Poetry." But even the prose tale could not get written. Tom, Tom, Tom — his heart was full of Tom, who "looks upon me as his only comfort," he writes to George. Yet, even in the midst of all this misery, he never loses his sense of direction. At bottom, he knows himself a dedicated being: "The only thing that can ever affect me personally for more than one short passing day, is any doubt about my powers of poetry — I seldom have any, and I look with hope to the nighing time when I shall have none." Proud words, but prouder still are those earlier in this same letter where he is speaking of the reviews: "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." This was no bombast, but the simple statement of a position which he recognized rather as a responsibility than anything else.

Youth naturally looks forward, but Keats seemed to be at a dead stop where no plans could be made. If he

[1] George Keats had eight children, but only two sons. There are many of his descendants in America to-day, but only one, a woman, who bears the name of Keats.

glimpsed the idea of spending a year with George in America, one look at Tom was enough to send the vision dissolving in smoke. He could not talk over such plans with Tom, he could not even ask Tom if he wanted to send a message to George, the effect of any recalling of his distant brother to the mind of the sick boy was too devastating, for he, certainly, would never see George again.

Yet once more, in this same letter, the leit-motif of sex becomes clearly audible, and this time it is the lady met at Hastings who is responsible. Keats encountered her quite unexpectedly "in a street which goes from Bedford Row to Lamb's Conduit Street." First Keats passed her; then, thinking better of it, turned back and joined her. They walked on "towards Islington," where the lady paid a call, and then back to the lady's lodgings in Gloucester Street, Queen Square. Her sitting-room Keats describes as "a very tasty sort of place with Books, Pictures, a bronze statue of Buonaparte, Music, æolian Harp; a Parrot, a Linnet, a Case of choice Liqueurs &c. &c. &c." Whoever this woman was, she had a heart and was quick at detecting atmospheres. She gave Keats a grouse for Tom's dinner, but would not let him kiss her at parting. This episode he recounts with such charming *naïveté* that I will give it in his own words. It is not quite the trivial matter it appears to be at first glance, rather is it the cat's-paw which indicates a change of wind.

> "As I had warmed with her before and kissed her I thought it would be living backwards not to do so again — she had a better taste: she perceived how much a thing of course it was and shrunk from it — not in a prudish way but in as I say a good taste . . . She said I should please her much more if I would only press her hand and go away. Whether she was in a different disposition when I saw her before — or whether I have in fancy wrong'd her I cannot tell."

Wronged or not, the lady met at Hastings was a kindly and an astute woman. What she saw was that Keats was quite different from the boy with whom, a year and a half before at Bo Peep, she had flirted lightly and inconsequentially as seaside vacationists have always done and always will do. This man, standing with the parrot, and the linnet, and the statue of Bonaparte in her little sitting-room, was another being entirely, one already marked by experience, a man who knew suffering, who faced tribulation, who had been stormed upon and would not yield. And he did not want to kiss her, only offered to do so as a polite attention. This experienced woman saw all this and more — she saw a preoccupation, an aloofness, a perplexed space on which she could not enter. Keats goes on to explain to George that he has "no libidinous thought about her — she and your George are the only women à peu près de mon age whom I would be content to know for their mind and friendship alone." If Keats were so susceptible as this, how came it that a woman whom he had previously found desirable left him completely passive? There is, I think, one answer, and one only — Fanny Brawne was in Hampstead and Keats had met her. I must defer speaking of Fanny Brawne for a few pages yet, but as she is the aura over this Autumn afternoon episode, and the concealed cause of a very important passage in the long letter to George, I must at least hint of her here as the clue to both. The passage in question follows immediately upon Keats's account of his afternoon:

> "I shall in a short time write you as far as I know how I intend to pass my Life — I cannot think of those things now Tom is so unwell and weak. Notwithstanding your Happiness and your recommendation I hope I shall never marry. Though the most beautiful Creature were waiting for me at the end of a Journey or a Walk; though the Carpet were of Silk, the Curtains of the morning Clouds; the chairs and Sofa stuffed with cygnet's down; the food

Manna, the Wine beyond Claret, the Window opening on Winander mere, I should not feel — or rather my Happiness would not be so fine, as my Solitude is sublime. Then instead of what I have described there is a sublimity to welcome me home. The roaring of the wind is my wife and the Stars through the window pane are my Children. The mighty abstract Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness — an amiable wife and sweet Children I contemplate as a part of that Beauty, but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart. I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me . . . According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches, or with Theocritus in the Vales of Sicily. Or I throw my whole being into Troilus, and repeating those lines, 'I wander like a lost Soul upon the Stygian Banks staying for waftage,' I melt into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate that I am content to be alone. These things, combined with the opinion I have of the generality of women — who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar Plum than my time, form a barrier against Matrimony which I rejoice in.

I have written this that you might see I have my share of the highest pleasures and that though I may choose to pass my days alone I shall be no Solitary. You see there is nothing spleenical in all this . . . I am as happy as a Man can be — that is in myself I should be happy if Tom was well, and I knew you were passing pleasant days. Then I should be most enviable — with the yearning Passion I have for the beautiful, connected and made one with the ambition of my intellect."

This was very likely written on the same day that Keats wrote to Woodhouse, for the passage is near the end of the letter, which was finally finished on Keats's birthday, October twenty-ninth. Certainly the idea of his being "with Achilles" or "with Troilus" is the same as the whole purport of the Woodhouse letter. But what does this

passage as a whole mean — that Keats really dreaded the idea of marriage and regarded the sex in general with cynical disdain? Scarcely this, I think. Let us take the disdain first, since it has been made a distinct point of attack by many critics. Because Keats was a great poet, we are apt to forget that he was also a very young and inexperienced man. The pronouncements of a boy of twenty-three in regard to the opposite sex are not to be taken too seriously, even when that boy is also a genius. After all, on what basis had Keats built his opinion? Why, on the extremely insecure one of the women he had known, to be sure. Just so, and who were these women? The Matthew girls, the Reynolds sisters, Mrs. Dilke, Mrs. Hunt — nice women, all of them, but not especially remarkable in any way. We get no impression of intellect from one or another, not a single member of the group seems to have been the kind of woman with whom Keats could have discussed literature on any plane of equality. The men, on the other hand, were distinctly intellectual, even those who have left no name to posterity. Apart from the obviously unusual men, like Hazlitt, and Hunt, and Haydon, there was a high degree of interest in literary affairs, and much critical acumen, displayed by all the group. Of course, Keats, being what he was, naturally gravitated toward men of mental power. The women he knew were simply the appendages to these men. Keats took them as they came, but long before his twenty-third year he had discovered that, whatever they gave him, it was not poetic stimulus; so far as poetry or intellect was concerned, time spent with them was wasted. Out of this grew the assumption that they were children merely, in all things which had to do solely with mind. Note, however, that Keats carefully says "the *generality* of women," which leaves room for a possible half-believed-in exception. Yet so little credence had he in his own exception, that, in the heat of his desire to create, he positively feared the

advent to himself of anything like passion. Absorption in a woman meant less concentration on poetry, or he imagined that it would, and that idea he could not brook, and all the more because he felt it stealing upon him. All the stuff about silken curtains and swan's-down sofas, was, I regret to say, nonsense and rhodomontade. For once, Keats was not perfectly sincere. This is rhetoric, a fault of which he was seldom guilty; but he had himself to convince as well as his brother and sister. How differently he wrote when he had nothing to hide, no *a priori* thesis to maintain. His sister-in-law he loved and admired, she was "a glorious human being"; he had no dread of her, she was George's wife, which fact lifted a load off his mind by placing her outside the orbit of his growing sexual consciousness. He could speak freely to her, and he did. This is what he says:

> "Your content in each other is a delight to me which I cannot express — the Moon is now shining full and brilliant — she is the same to me in Matter, what you are to me in Spirit. If you were here my dear Sister I could not pronounce the words which I can write to you from a distance: I have a tenderness for you, and an admiration which I feel to be as great and more chaste than I can have for any woman in the world."

The pity of Georgiana's departure! Keats had always needed a sister and never more than now. Fanny was too young; but then, I fear, Georgiana was that also at this period. As things were, he was obliged to meet the huge problem of sex alone, a problem with which he was, as yet, totally unfitted to cope.

Early in November, a peculiar thing happened. Keats received an anonymous, laudatory sonnet enclosing a twenty-five pound note. This communication was addressed to him at Teignmouth, from which place it had been forwarded to Taylor and Hessey. Naturally Keats was pleased at this evidence of sympathy, but he was rather

nonplussed by the bank-note. He kept it, however (what else could he do?), "if I had refused it," he wrote to George, "I should have behaved in a very braggadocio dunderheaded manner — and yet the present galls me a little, and I do not know whether I shall not return it if I ever meet with the donor, after whom to no purpose have I written." It has never been discovered who the donor was.

In the mean time, for all these diverse threads and threadlets of varying interests, Keats was really seeing very few people. "I have been but once to Haydon's, once to Hunt's, once to Rice's, once to Hessey's. I have not seen Taylor, I have not been to the Theatre." This was the state of affairs in the middle of October, when he had been back in Hampstead for two months. He made a point of going to Mrs. Wylie's as often as he could on Georgiana's account, but these calls at this time numbered only two. Tom, and Tom only, was his chief concern. The difficulty of procuring Abbey's consent to Fanny's visits was a constant source of trouble and misery. On one of them, Keats had taken her to call on some of his friends, which incensed Abbey, who knew nothing of the people in question and distrusted any one who was a friend of John's. After this, Keats wrote to Fanny suggesting, very covertly, that she should not mention her doings at Hampstead to the Abbeys. His endeavour to convey the idea without exactly countenancing deceit is very amusing. Having floundered somewhat awkwardly in making his counsel balance with his ideas of sincerity, he ends with the pathetic quibble: "Perhaps I am talking too deeply for you: if you do not know now, you will understand what I mean in the course of a few years." Since Fanny was fifteen, and by no means a stupid girl, she was probably perfectly capable of appreciating John's sophistry and being entertained by it.

On November fifth, Keats wrote to Fanny that he had seen Abbey three times to beg him to let her come and see

Tom, but had not been able to get his consent. "He says that once more between this and the Holydays will be sufficient," Keats reports. Incredible callousness to keep a sister from a dying brother! And I think the "once more" never took place. Tom was sinking rapidly; he died just as the sun was rising on the morning of December first.

Worn out with nursing, overwhelmed with grief, Keats stumbled out in the early morning sunlight to find Brown, to whom he had grown very close during the months in Scotland. Brown has told the story of their meeting, he says:

> [1] "Early the next morning, I was awakened in bed by a pressure on my hand. It was Keats, who came to tell me that his brother was no more. I said nothing, and we both remained silent for a while, my hand fast locked in his. At length, my thoughts returning from the dead to the living, I said, — 'Have nothing more to do with those lodgings — and alone too! Had you not better live with me?' He paused, pressed my hand warmly, and replied, 'I think it would be better.' From that moment he was my inmate.'

That same day Brown wrote to Woodhouse. The letter is dated "Hampstead, Tuesday 1st December" and says:

> [2] Sir:
>
> Mr. Keats requests me to inform you his brother Thomas died this morning at 8 o'clock quietly and without pain. Mr. Keats is pretty well and desires to be remembered to you.
>
> I am, Sir, your obed' & hum. Serv't
>
> Chas Brown."

It has always been thought that Tom Keats died in the night, but in this note we have direct proof to the contrary. There is an odd contradiction here, nevertheless, for Keats wrote to his sister, telling her that Tom had been so ill he

[1] Quoted by Sir Sidney Colvin in his *Life of John Keats.*
[2] Unpublished Letter. Author's Collection.

had delayed her visit, and adding "I cannot say he is any better this morning — he is in a very dangerous state — I have scarce any hopes of him." This letter is dated "Tuesday Morn" and postmarked "Hampstead 1 December 1818." If Tom were already dead, why did Keats write to Fanny as though he were alive? The answer is, I am confident, one of two things. Either Keats wrote this letter to Fanny to prepare her before going to see her and telling her in person; or Keats wrote the letter very early in the morning before Tom died and posted it just the same, again with the idea of preparation. It is just possible that Keats's landlord, being a postman, may have taken the letter to the post-office when he started on his duties, which would very probably have been before eight o'clock, but this seems so little likely that I think it may be dismissed.

Poor little Tom was dead, and Keats was desolate indeed. The idea of writing to George was terrible to him, and Haslam took on himself the sad duty. Tom was buried on Thursday, December third, in St. Stephen's Church, Coleman Street, where his father and grandmother were also buried.

We know very little of Tom Keats. What little we do know shows him to have been an eager, intelligent, and affectionate fellow. We have George's word for it that he understood John better than any one else did, and we can see from John's letters to him from Scotland how close the tie between them was. What, then, can be the meaning of a passage in an unpublished letter from Bailey to Taylor? The same letter, indeed, which told the story of Bailey's meeting with Lockhart. At the time when Bailey wrote (August twenty-ninth) Tom was known to be very ill; it was not, indeed, expected that he could live as long as he did. Bailey's words are these:

[1] "I do not well know what to think, whether good or

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

> bad of this young man; if it happen. It looks harsh to say it is happy; and yet from his character he must have lived a life of discomfort to himself & those with whom he was connected, if the character I have heard of him be just."

What on earth was the character Bailey had heard of him? We would give much to know. Whatever it was, Bailey declared himself "religiously persuaded, all is for the best." Very easy for Bailey to say, very conventional, very cold and unfeeling. Bailey the curate was fast murdering Bailey the man. Sinister though his remarks appear to be, I feel sure, from the other evidence at hand, that all Bailey's suggested charges amount to is that Tom was impatient with the cruelty of his fate, that he could not look calmly forward to a life of invalidism. Could any young man of nineteen? Bailey's clay feet peep from under his canonical robes very plainly in this passage. His usefulness to Keats was over; the friendship was nearing its term.

Tom's death left Keats peculiarly alone. As he told George, he still had Fanny and George and Georgiana. But Fanny was under Abbey's roof and Abbey's jurisdiction, and John was not a welcome visitor at Pancras Lane or Walthamstow, while George and Georgiana were half a world away, and distance, if it weakened no jot of the brothers' affection, did at least forbid the daily intimacy so necessary to continued understanding. Under these circumstances, Brown's invitation to Keats to come and live with him was a godsend. Brown had no family to be considered, and he and Keats had sampled their power of getting on together during the trying Scotch trip. They had no discoveries to make about each other; their "domesticating" together (the word is Keats's) was bound to work, and it did.

Wentworth Place was, as I have said,[1] a double house,

[1] See Vol. I, p. 469.

jointly owned by Dilke and Brown. Dilke's half was the larger, Brown, being a bachelor, needing less room. Brown's part of the house consisted of two sitting-rooms, front and back, on the ground floor, the first looking on the road, the last into the garden, which was not divided, but enjoyed in common by the two families; upstairs were two corresponding bedrooms, front and back, and somewhere a small cubby-hole in which a guest could be put up for the night. The arrangement was that Keats should have the front parlour and Brown the back. If Brown's windows opened on the garden, Keats's commanded a view of Hampstead Heath across the road, so it was a toss-up which had the most agreeable outlook. Keats was to pay his share of the living expenses, and each was to pursue the ordinary tenor of his life, working in their different studies. Keats was glad to escape the noise of the Bentley children, and altogether the arrangement offered many advantages. Apparently Keats did not move his goods and chattels from the Well Walk lodgings for some weeks, but I think Sir Sidney Colvin is wrong in considering Brown mistaken in saying that Keats came to him permanently on the very day that Tom died, for Keats himself wrote George, sometime in December: "Brown detained me at his House." What seems to have happened was that Keats came at once to Brown's, but had neither the strength nor the fortitude to get his things together and break up the old home for some weeks after Tom's death.

There can be no exaggeration of the blow which Tom's death was to John, and the courage with which he faced the great task of reorganizing his life was utterly admirable. But his nerves were badly shaken; morbid fancies assailed him. On one occasion, a white rabbit strayed into the Wentworth Place garden and Dilke shot it. Keats was very much upset by the occurrence, declaring that the rabbit was Tom's spirit. No reasons nor arguments had the

slightest effect upon him and he held to his opinion so earnestly that when the rabbit, cooked and dished, appeared on the table, no one felt any inclination to eat it, and it was sent away untouched. Yet, even when in the clutches of painful imaginings such as this, deep in his mind Keats knew, and his friends knew, that he must begin to live a life among people again as soon as possible. It was for this reason, undoubtedly, that they insisted upon his going to the prize-fight between Jack Randall and Ned Turner, on Saturday, December fifth. This famous fight took place at Crawley Hurst in Sussex, so that the excursion must have been an all day affair. The weather was wretched, but "that did not prevent a great crowd from assembling."[1] The excitement was tremendous. It was said that thirty thousand pounds had been wagered on the result. It was an event of prime importance to the sporting world, and one which no young man interested in boxing could afford to miss. Keats's interest in boxing may have waned at this time, but Reynolds was at hand to revive it, and as both Turner and Randall had trained at Hampstead Heath, Keats, who had probably watched them at work many times, was naturally interested in the fight. Interest in it was in the air. Pierce Egan, in describing the encounter and the day, says: "The interest excited in the Metropolis on the above night upon this event, to those persons out of the ring, may appear like a romance. Hundreds were waiting at the turnpike gates, along the road, to learn who had won." Randall was the victor in the thirty-fourth round.

Who Keats's companions at Crawley Hurst were, we are not told. It is no matter. The important thing for us to note is the wisdom and sanity on their parts, and on Keats's, which led him to make one of the crowd who trooped into Sussex that day.

The first weeks after Tom's death must have been

[1] *The Story of Boxing*, by Trevor C. Wignall.

bitter ones indeed. Keats's friends evidently felt that he must be helped to regain his footing upon life, and as an occasion like the Randall-Turner fight could not be happened on every day, they tried to think of other things. An opportunity to help in this effort came to Woodhouse early in December. Woodhouse had a cousin, a Miss Frogley, who lived at Hounslow. To her, Woodhouse had lent a copy of *Endymion*. Before she had time to read it, however, it was begged of her by a Mr. Henry Neville, "house surgeon to the late Princess Charlotte," Woodhouse remarks, by way of introduction. One day, Miss Jane Porter, then in the height of her fame as the author of the popular romances *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and *The Scottish Chiefs*, saw the book on Neville's table, and in her turn borrowed it. She returned it with a letter in which she spoke of the "very rare delight" it had given her and her sister, and hoped that "the ill-natured review will not have damped such true Parnassian fire." But more than this, she regretted that Mr. Neville did not know the author as she would have liked to make his acquaintance. Miss Frogley sent this letter to Woodhouse, who enclosed it to Keats, pointing out to him that this was an opening "for an introduction to a Class of society from which you may possibly derive advantage, as well as gratification, if you think proper to avail yourself of it." Keats did not think proper, or, at least, not at the moment. Woodhouse wrote on December tenth, Keats did not answer until the eighteenth. He found the suggestion gratifying, but not of epochal significance. Among other things, he said:

> "I should like very much to know those ladies — though look here, Woodhouse — I have a new leaf to turn over: I must work; I must read; I must write. I am unable to afford time for new acquaintances. I am scarcely able to do my duty by those I have. Leave the matter to chance."

That chance was very unlikely to cross Keats's orbit

with that of Miss Porter, he probably realized quite well, although, a little later, he did say to George:

> "I will be introduced to them if it be merely for the pleasure of writing to you about it — I shall certainly see a new race of People. I shall more certainly have no time for them."

The introduction never took place; Keats had no love for the literary blue stocking.

It was not until the middle of December (at least that seems to be the time when the letter was begun) that Keats could bring himself to write again to his brother and sister-in-law in America. Then he was able to say to them: "I have scarce a doubt of immortality of some nature or other — neither had Tom." This is important, as it shows how gradually his religious belief left him. Later, he lost his belief in any future after death. Farther on in the letter, he adds:

> "There you are with Birkbeck — here I am with Brown — sometimes I fancy an immense separation, and sometimes as at present, a direct communication of Spirit with you. That will be one of the grandeurs of immortality. There will be no space, and consequently the only commerce between spirits will be by their intelligence of each other — when they will completely understand each other, while we in this world merely comprehend each other in different degrees — the higher the degree of good so higher our Love and Friendship."

The letter, a very long one, chats of many things, for, says Keats, "Within this last Week I have been every where," and he goes on to tell of calling on Georgiana's cousins, the Millars, in Henrietta Street; of going out with Mrs. Dilke to Walthamstow to see Fanny (Mr. Abbey does not seem to have objected to Mrs. Dilke as an acquaintance for his ward); of Haslam's constant kindness, his last attention being a gift of some especially thin paper

for transatlantic correspondence (we shall hear of this thin paper again); of Leigh Hunt's just published *Literary Pocket Book* for 1819 (the first of the series), which he declares to be "full of the most sickening stuff you can imagine," although his own sonnet *To Ailsa Rock* was in it; of dropping in on Hazlitt, and of going to see Kean in "Brutus a new Tragedy by Howard Payne, an American, on which his comment is: "Kean was excellent — the play was very bad." Hunt has asked him to meet Tom Moore, and taken him and Brown to Novello's where "we were devastated and excruciated with bad and repeated puns — Brown don't want to go again." The evening was "a complete set-to of Mozart and punning." The effect of this evening was to bring forth the following diatribe:

> "I was so completely tired of it that if I were to follow my own inclinations I should never meet any one of that set again, not even Hunt who is certainly a pleasant fellow in the main when you are with him — but in reality he is vain, egotistical, and disgusting in matters of taste and in morals. He understands many a beautiful thing; but then, instead of giving other minds credit for the same degree of perception as he himself professes — he begins an explanation in such a curious manner that our taste and self-love is offended continually. Hunt does one harm by making fine things petty and beautiful things hateful."

Since Hunt's morals were nothing short of impeccable, we can see that Haydon had been one of the many people whom Keats had been seeing, for Haydon applied the word "morals" to religious opinions, a subject on which he and Hunt were forever at odds.

In the midst of this confused jumble of activities, there suddenly peeps into the letter, and for the first time, a mention of Fanny Brawne. It was not only bull-dog grit which brought Keats back to the world; it was excitement, interest, delight and anxiety. It was, in short, love; for Keats was already deeply in love with Miss Brawne.

Nothing in Keats's life has been so misunderstood and misjudged as the relations between him and Fanny Brawne, and few women have had to suffer more from the ignorant malevolence of posterity than Fanny Brawne has. He, in his love for her, and she, in being the woman he loved, have been held up for pity and scorn by the critics of a hundred years. The odium began with Keats's friends, but Matthew Arnold capped the topmost tower of vituperation when he called Keats's love-letters vulgar, and said they were the letters of a "surgeon's apprentice." The snobbishness under the calumny proves where the stricture really lies. Matthew Arnold, for all his culture, his reiterated cry for "sweetness and light," was an arch-snob. His attitude toward the people he met when he toured America, lecturing under the auspices of P. T. Barnum, is one proof of this, and there are many others scattered through his letters. Arnold was a snob in regard to people, but quite the reverse where books were concerned. People, he did not understand; books he did. The man who could say of Keats's poems: "No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats, his perfection of loveliness"[1] was a shrewd judge of literary merit. But with all his shrewdness, Arnold never had the slightest conception of Keats's character. No inkling of the man, John Keats, ever entered his head. His very keenness of perception in literary matters, the fruit of years of training, perplexed and retarded his brain where people were concerned. And he had not the excuse of a jealous love, which in some measure exculpates Keats's personal friends.

Let us look at the matter a little more sympathetically, and see, if we can, what is the truth of this sad and bitter love between John Keats and Fanny Brawne.

Brown had a habit of going off somewhere every Summer and letting his house for the period of his absence.

[1] *Essays in Criticism. Second Series*, by Matthew Arnold.

In the Summer of 1818, while he and Keats were walking about Scotland, his tenants had been a widow lady named Brawne and her children, two girls and a boy. Fanny, the oldest of the family, was born on August ninth, 1800, and christened "Frances." A boy, Samuel, was the second child, he was still going to school at this period; the youngest was a girl named Margaret. Buxton Forman says that Mr. Samuel Brawne, the father, a "gentleman of independent means,"[1] died while Fanny was still a child. At the time of their taking Brown's house, the Brawne family were total strangers to every one whom Keats knew, but by the time Keats returned to Hampstead a strong friendship had sprung up between them and the Dilkes. The intimacy of the double house and the single garden would probably have produced such a result in any case, but in this there was unusual congeniality of tastes and tempers. So much had the Brawnes come to like Hampstead that, when the expiration of their lease and Brown's return made moving imperative, they moved no farther than Downshire Hill. The friendship with the Dilkes continued — continued, indeed for many years — and Keats, a constant visitor at Wentworth Place, must assuredly have met Miss Brawne not long after his return, but just when we do not know. Dilke thinks it must have been in October or November, but also says that it was soon after Keats came back from Scotland. Since he was in Hampstead by the middle of August, it seems more probable that the meeting occurred not later than some time early in September. If it cannot be stated as a certainty, nevertheless it appears quite evident that the Brawnes were the friends to whose house he took his sister, as mentioned in his letter to her of October twenty-sixth.[2] Something very like proof that this was so, lies in the fact that Abbey objected to his having

[1] Introduction to *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne*, edited by H. Buxton Forman.

[2] See Vol. II, p. 116.

taken his sister there, as he surely would not have done had the call been on the Dilkes, and the Dilkes and the Brawnes were the only people to whom Keats would have been likely to take her, being the only houses in Hampstead where he was on an intimate footing in which there were ladies; for certainly, in view of the strict conventions of the period, he would never have dreamt of taking a young girl to a house where there were only men, such as Brown's, for instance. Then, too, what more natural than to want the two Fannies to make each other's acquaintance, considering that one was his only sister and the other the girl with whom he was in love. Fanny Brawne was only three years older than Fanny Keats, a difference of age the importance of which was bound to diminish with time. The two girls seem to have taken to each other at once, and her friendship with his sister appears to have been Fanny Brawne's chief comfort in the years immediately succeeding Keats's death.

Apparently Keats fell in love with Fanny Brawne almost as soon as he met her. He himself considered that it was immediately. Writing to her from Shanklin in the following July, he says:

> "I have, believe me, not been an age in letting you take possession of me; the very first week I knew you I wrote myself your vassal; but burnt the Letter as the very next time I saw you I thought you manifested some dislike to me. If you should ever feel for Man at the first sight what I did for you, I am lost."

That he had not met her at the time of the Charmian episode, seems indubitable. The man who was haunted by the Reynoldses' cousin for a night had not then written himself down anybody's vassal. But we are distinctly told that the call on the Reynoldses, during which he met their East Indian relation, was the first he made to Little Britain after his return, and, intimate as he was with the Reynolds

family, we may suppose that he went to see them as soon as he could. It is clear to see that, when he encountered the lady met at Hastings in the street near Bedford Row, he had given himself completely to Fanny Brawne, and had no room left for even the mildest philandering.

Keats considered Fanny Brawne to be dowered with extraordinary beauty, an opinion which must, I fear, be put down to a lover's partiality. Some beauty she seems to have had, however, of a quasi-statuesque kind, to judge by the silhouette of her by the French silhouettist Edouart. Edouart was famous for his likenesses, so probably this is a good portrait, as far as it goes. Her hair is said to have been very beautiful. I have a lock of it, which is of a rather usual brown colour, but it may have faded. At any rate, whatever its hue, she was most particular as to its arrangement, wearing it interlaced with ribbons after the fashion of the time. Her eyes were blue and sparkling. She seems to have been something of a "rattle," as it used to be called, liking smart sallies and badinage, and an innocent measure of flirtation. With the statuesque figure I have mentioned, this manner may well have jarred and offended a fastidious taste; not because it was tasteless in itself, but because it did not suit her.

Everyone who knew Fanny Brawne testifies to her determined and independent character. As Buxton Forman says,[1] probably from information supplied by her daughter, "it was not easy to turn her from a settled purpose." She was well educated for a girl of her class and period, and a voluminous, if not a particularly critical, reader, and this reading was by no means confined to light literature. Certain subjects which interested her, she followed up with steady perseverance; one of these — and one which she is supposed to have studied with some thoroughness — was the history of costume, "in which she was so

[1] Introduction to the Keats-Brawne Correspondence, edited by H. Buxton Forman.

well read as to be able to answer any question of detail at a moment's notice." She was also interested in politics, which she was wont to discuss with fire and animation. Altogether a girl of no mean mental abilities, although legend has so carefully obscured the fact. In later life, she wrote for *Blackwood's*. She spoke and read both French and German, and amused herself, years after Keats's death, by making translations of German stories.

There is no doubt that this somewhat imperious young woman — for such seems to have been the manner she turned to the world at the time — was used to admiration, and liked to dance. There were balls at Hampstead, balls at Woolwich, and those were the days just after Waterloo, when "military men" were much in vogue. Waltzing had just come in, and to waltz with an officer was bliss, in the eyes of eighteen. To Keats, who did not dance and who hated soldiers, this taste was incomprehensible and irritating, which is nothing to marvel at, perhaps. But I find no real evidence that Fanny Brawne was over-much occupied with these things, legend to the contrary notwithstanding. Our chief informant on this side of Miss Brawne's character is a most untrustworthy one — a cousin, who as a boy, seventy years earlier, had seen her in her mother's house.[1] His remarks verge on the malicious, and when we think how many years had elapsed, and how the legend had grown in the meantime, we shall not feel constrained to give his recollections unqualified credence.

At the time Keats met her, Fanny Brawne was just eighteen. That she had enough sweetness and depth of character to fall in love with the poet, I think there can be no doubt; and I believe she thoroughly satisfied the passionate part of Keats's love, satisfied it to a painful extent considering that they could not marry. She kept Keats in a burning agitation of desire which, under the circumstances, she was powerless to gratify. How much of

[1] Account published in the *New York Herald*, April 12, 1889.

this she may have understood, we have not as yet sufficient means of knowing. But the other side of love, the maternal side, she scarcely seems to have been mature enough to comprehend. She certainly developed, and grew more tender, as time went on; but the mothering which Keats so sorely needed, she had only begun to learn to give him when he died.

I think one must accord her a little pity, for she can have known very few hours of happiness in her love. It need not surprise us if the very violence of Keats's feelings kept her own somewhat in abeyance. She shows a rare patience with a lover who leaves her so much alone. He was forced to do so — granted. But how many girls would have understood the reason and not resented the fact. People always speak as though it should have been enough for her to have been engaged to such a genius. But only a *poseuse* engages herself to marry a poet, as such. To Fanny Brawne, Keats was the man she loved — "my Keats," she calls him — not a genius writing poems for posterity. And just as she is beginning to understand him, his needs, his moods, he falls ill, and after that is only the misery of a fast-failing hope ending in despair.

Fanny Brawne was no such charming and unusual character as George's wife, Georgiana Wylie, but neither was she the frivolous and heartless coquette which she is often represented to have been. Keats's friends thought her not worthy of him, but that would have been inevitable in any case, so highly did they regard him. That she married ten years after Keats's death, is nothing; ten years is a long time to cling to a memory so harassed and incomplete. Georgiana Keats married after her husband's death, but no one has dared to suggest that therefore she never loved George. If Fanny Brawne did, many years later, part with her miniature of Keats to Dilke, it is an unfortunate circumstance; and we are told that it was another unfortunate circumstance, nothing less than

financial disaster to her husband, which brought it about. But she did not part with the copy of *Lamia* which the poet gave her, for her daughter gave it, many years after her mother's death, to Mr. Buxton Forman, who kept it until his death when it passed into my hands.

Keats's mention of Miss Brawne in the letter to George was simply because he could not keep her out. The tone of his remarks shows how assiduously he was trying to throw dust in his brother's eyes as to his attitude toward her. From first to last, Keats was extraordinarily reticent about his love; it was too real, too deep, and he was too sensitive, to bear the thought of prying eyes and whispered speculations. The engagement, when it came, does not appear to have been announced in the usual manner; it leaked out, from all we can see, and became a settled fact to their mutual circle by degrees, as it were, gradually growing upon the consciousness of their friends from the evidence daily before their eyes. If Keats could not, for the life of him, keep Fanny Brawne out of his letter, he fondly believed he could throw his brother completely off the track by his manner of speaking of her. The charms of a Charmian he had no hesitation in detailing; Fanny Brawne's effect on him was beyond charm, so far beyond that he must belittle her or give himself away. Her first entrance into the letter is as follows:

> "Mrs. Brawne who took Brown's house for the Summer still resides in Hampstead — she is a very nice woman — and her daughter senior is I think beautiful and elegant, graceful, silly, fashionable and strange — we have a little tiff now and then — and she behaves a little better, or I must have sheered off."

Had Keats been a little more experienced, he would not have found this vivacious girl so strange. Fanny seems to have begun with him as she was accustomed to begin with all young men, a style of intercourse which Keats did not

in the least understand. Yet we can imagine that her very strangeness, and the piquant unusualness (in Keats's experience) of her address, combined with her entrancing frocks, were a considerable part of the lure in the first instance. What Keats was long in guessing was that this manner of wilful badinage was assumed to hide her real feelings, as there is considerable evidence to prove that she fell in love with him almost as soon as he did with her.

A couple of pages farther on in the letter, Keats is constrained to speak of her again. This time the dust is thrown in still larger quantities. Apropos of nothing, Keats suddenly begins:

> "Shall I give you Miss Brawne? She is about my height — with a fine style of countenance of the lengthened sort — she wants sentiment in every feature — she manages to make her hair look well — her nostrils are fine — though a little painful — her mouth is bad and good — her Profile is better than her full-face which indeed is not full but pale and thin without showing any bone. Her shape is very graceful and so are her movements — her Arms are good, her hands bad-ish — her feet tolerable — she is not seventeen [1] — but she is ignorant — monstrous in her behaviour, flying out in all directions, calling people such names — that I was forced lately to make use of the term *Minx* — this I think not from any innate vice but from a penchant she has for acting stylishly. I am however tired of such style and shall decline any more or it. She had a friend to visit her lately . . . a downright Miss without one set-off. We hated her and smoked her and baited her and I think drove her away. Miss B. thinks her a Paragon of fashion, and says she is the only woman she would change persons with. What a stupe — She is superior as a Rose to a dandelion."

Dust though this was, there were grains of truth in it. Keats was at once repelled and drawn. Drawn, alas, more by the girl's bodily attractions than by the spirit which

[1] This was an error.

animated them. This was one reason for the hard course of his love. There was too much of the merely physical in its composition. Unsatisfied desire kept him forever dwelling upon things which could not be, to the exclusion of that part of his lady which craved a fuller understanding. Fanny Brawne deserved better than this. Looking at their relations without bias, thrusting our minds away from the conventional interpretation, I think we must admit that he wronged her far more seriously than she ever wronged him. Her patience with him was unbounded; his with her was no bigger than a millet seed.

It has been my good fortune to have come upon a number of Fanny Brawne's letters, mostly written after Keats's death, to Fanny Keats. They are the property of a gentleman who does not wish his name to be disclosed. But this anonymity need alarm nobody; there is no doubt as to the authenticity of the letters, as I, who have seen a couple of the originals, can testify. From these letters, we gain a very clear idea as to what sort of woman Fanny Brawne really was. Several of these letters, or rather parts of them, I must keep for insertion where they properly belong, but a few, dating from later years, I will give here, as a corrective to Keats's portrait.

The first was written in the November after Keats's death:

> " . . . my brother was in the country . . . As soon as he returned I sent him with a note for you and heard to my great surprise you were not expected for a week — I hope by that time you will have an opportunity of reading . . . I go on as usual reading every trumpery novel that comes in my way spoiling my taste and understanding, as for acquaintances I see none unless I take the trouble of going after them."

Certainly Fanny Brawne was in mourning at this time, but what is ingrained does not alter. No giddy butterfly,

such as she has been represented, could ever have been in the state of seeing no acquaintances. As for the novels, what a human touch they bring in, and let us not forget that Jane Austen was an omnivorous reader of that branch of literature.

The letter from which the next quotation comes is undated:

> "I have been expecting some account of the pleasure I think you must have felt at King Lear though in it you did not see Kean to the best advantage and though the play itself is spoiled.[1] I have only seen Miss Edmiston in Lady Macbeth and admired her person but did not think much of her acting. In Cordelia she may be better . . . the play itself is not one I should wish to see again. Read it as originally written and you will soon see the difference. They say, as a foolish reason for acting it in its present state that formerly it was too affecting but I am convinced that the more people are affected the more they are pleased . . . Dr. Johnson who saw it before the alteration said it was too much to bear and that nothing should induce him to sit it out again."

There is intelligence here, and artistic feeling. The girl who wrote that passage was far more fitted to be Keats's wife than the wife of one of the officers who graced the Hampstead balls. That Keats's judgments were final to her, and that she was capable of assimilating his opinions and learning from him, the next quotation shows:

> "I have therefore sent you Spenser instead, which you will feel the more pleasure in reading as you will find the best part marked by one who I have heard called the best judge of poetry living — they were marked for me to read,[2] and I need not say with what pleasure I did so . . . The serious poems of Lord Byron were given me by a school fellow . . . I can remember being half wild about them learning and repeating continually when alone but as my

[1] It was given in a cut and bowdlerized version. [2] See Vol. II, p. 414.

dear Keats did not admire Lord Byron's poetry as many people do it soon lost its value with me. If I am not mistaken he thought Manfred one of the best."

Another undated letter contains a clue to what I believe to be the real Fanny Brawne. What she was in very truth, which is far indeed from what Keats — first in his misunderstanding blindness; later in his sick suspicion — sometimes conceived her to be.

"How delightful it would be to have you with me tonight. I am quite alone I am always glad to get my *family* out (to provoke me they seldom ever go) and then highly favoured indeed is the person I would wish for or even admit. There is one and only one person in the world besides yourself that I would admit tonight and her coming is about as possible as yours — I was asked out to tea by some friends who thought I must feel 'lonely' — for my part I think people are all mad."

A young woman who likes to be alone has resources within herself, resources of mind; Fanny Brawne, eagerly looking forward to a few hours of solitude which only two people whom she knows (both women) are worthy to break in upon, can scarcely have been as avid for society as tradition would lead one to suppose. Either Keats's death changed her radically, or she never was the flibbertigibbet some of his friends chose to imagine. The latter is, I am certain, the correct view. As we follow the rest of Keats's short life, we shall be struck again and again by her sweetness, her loyalty, her charity and prodigious patience. She was not a woman to wear her heart on her sleeve. When Keats died, she was prostrated and seriously ill for some time. The severity of her illness is proved by the fact that her hair lost much of its colour.[1] A lady who knew her at this period recollects her as "a dignified looking woman, fair, but pale,"[2] and she remembers being told

[1] Unpublished letter of Fanny Brawne.
[2] Quoted in *Sweet Hampstead*, by Mrs. C. A. White.

that Miss Brawne had "lost her colour in an illness she had after her engagement with Keats was broken off." Broken off! It never was. Death, and death only, had the power to separate them, but the Hampstead gossips did not know that.

So strongly, so deeply, so unalterably did Fanny Brawne love Keats, that when, twenty years later, Severn returned to England and wished to see her, she could not bring herself to receive him, the associations connected with him were so painful; she feared to open a wound which was only too likely to bleed afresh. It is true that she finally married, but not until ten years had passed. Her husband was a Spanish Jew named Lewis Lindo; he afterwards changed his name to Lindon. Whatever comfort and peace she may have found in this marriage, she seems always to have cherished the memory of Keats as something sacred, but not to be spoken of. His letters she guarded with scrupulous care, and later, much later, when her children were grown up, she enjoined them to treasure these same letters, saying, with what must have been almost a pang of understanding and loyalty, that "they would some day be considered of value."[1] That this was her final sacrifice for Keats, his reputation, his vital claim on posterity, we cannot doubt. Far from condemning the suggestion which induced her children, years after her death, to permit the publication of these same letters, we should esteem it the crowning act of a love that, with the contemplation of years, had become heroic. She died in 1865.

I have so far outrun time, because it is not my intention to carry this book beyond the moment of Keats's death. The vicissitudes of his after fame have been amply treated by Sir Sidney Colvin. Fanny Brawne's life, as we know it, I have given here, since no clear understanding of her character can be gained without taking

[1] Introduction to Keats-Brawne Correspondence, by Buxton Forman.

all we can learn of her into consideration; also, this knowledge will help to clarify many things in the ensuing chapters.

Keats, then, in mid-December, 1818, was already irrevocably in love with Fanny Brawne. He felt enslaved, that is abundantly evident, not so much by Fanny herself as by love. His liberty, his unvexed concentration on poetry, he believed to be menaced by the presence of this imperious preoccupation from which he could not tear himself. It was a bitter and a glorious experience, but his alternations of hope and fear made his existence rather a fevered one. Undoubtedly his state of mind kept him from morbidly grieving over Tom's death as much as he otherwise would have done, and that was a good thing. All through December, Keats was suffering the fate of every young man in love. Will she? Won't she? Does she? Does she not? His mind struggled with these vital questions every hour of the day. Yet Keats, encompassed by this haze of conjecture, agonized with apprehension, lifted up on the wings of an almost intolerable hope, made a fine effort to keep himself face forward towards the life he had mapped out and go on with his work. This was no easy task, but Keats had a strong will and an indomitable pride; so to work he went, because he was determined to do so. This is what he says to George:

> "I am passing a Quiet day — which I have not done for a long while — and if I do continue so, I feel I must again begin with my poetry — for if I am not in action mind or Body I am in pain — and from that I suffer greatly by going into parties where from the rules of society and a natural pride I am obliged to smother my Spirit and look like an Idiot — because I feel my impulses given way to would too much amaze them — I live under an everlasting restraint — never relieved except when I am composing — so I will write away."

He wanted to write *Hyperion*, but found the doing so

very difficult. In the letter to George, just before the second mention of Miss Brawne, he wrote:

> "I think you knew before you left England, that my next subject would be 'the fall of Hyperion.' I went on a little with it last night, but it will take some time to get into the vein again. I will not give you any extracts, because I wish the whole to make an impression. I have however a few Poems which you will like, and I will copy out on the next sheet."

The first of these copied poems is the rather long imaginative piece, *Fancy*. It is written in trochaic heptasyllables, the same metre that Keats had employed in the *Mermaid Tavern* and *Robin Hood*. Keats is never too happy in this metre. Professor de Sélincourt thinks that he "was never completely successful," with it "till he wrote the 'Eve of St. Mark.'" Professor de Sélincourt forgets that the *Eve of St. Mark* is iambic, not trochaic, a much easier metre to write. Why the trochaic metre did not suit him, there is no saying; but it is a fact that his best poems were all written in iambics, whether the form were blank verse, heroic couplet, sonnet, or the heptasyllables of the *Eve of St. Mark*. Tripping metres were not in Keats's line. Keats heralds the poem to George very simply: "Here are the Poems — they will explain themselves — as all poems should do without any comment."

No explanation was possible really. *Fancy* is once again a catalogue of "luxuries," but how inferior to *I Stood Tiptoe*, even though Keats had acquired a far greater firmness of presentation and a less adolescent attitude. The freshness of delight is not here. This is a sober catalogue of beautiful facts, a whole year's gamut of beauty. Each season adds its quota, but Keats presents these things with the careful eye of observation rather than with the effervescence of wonder. This is Keats soothing his harassed soul by remembering the loveliness, quaintness, and charm

of Nature, which, to him, was perennially peace-giving. In the imaginative world where his fancy strays, the three flowering seasons exist together; or rather, whatever is attractive in each one of the three is isolated and included. Some of the lines are extremely pleasant, as, for instance, these:

> "Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
> Meagre from its celled sleep;
> And the snake all winter-thin
> Cast on sunny bank its skin;
> Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
> Hatching in the hawthorn tree,
> . . . . .
> Then the hurry and alarm
> When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
> Acorns ripe down-pattering,
> While the autumn breezes sing."

The last line is poor, and Keats left it! That is a pity; he should have been able to improve it into something less commonplace. Yet he did work over the poem quite a little; there are many changes between the version sent to George and that printed in the *Lamia* volume. It is from the last that I have quoted.

The second poem copied, *Bards of Passion and of Mirth*, is again heptasyllabic, and again Keats essays the trochaic form. The poem was originally written in his copy of Beaumont and Fletcher, on a blank page opposite *The Fair Maid of the Inn*. Keats told George that the subject was "the double immortality of poets." Undoubtedly the "bards" were Beaumont and Fletcher. It has been suggested that Keats found the idea of his poem in one of Wordsworth's, the third of the series printed under the title *Memorial of a Tour in Scotland*; if so, he coupled it with recollections of Drayton's *Muses Elysium*.[1] The two poems taken together may very possibly have en-

[1] See Vol. I, p. 563.

gendered *Bards of Passion*. But no matter whence it came, the poem is dull, not felt, heavy to read and leaving no impression afterwards.

Keats speaks of these poems as "specimens of a sort of rondeau which I think I shall become partial to — because you have one idea amplified with greater ease and more delight and freedom than in the sonnet." Keats was always longing to "free" his verse, always trying experiments which should unshackle it from convention. That he never quite succeeded in his experimental efforts, was the fault of his time rather than of his endeavour. Why he spoke of these poems as rondeaux can only be attributed to ignorance. As Professor de Sélincourt aptly remarks: "Keats's idea of the Rondeau form must have been somewhat vague."[1] They are no more rondeaux than they are limericks. For some inexplicable reason, *Bards of Passion*, when it was published in the *Lamia* volume, was entitled *Ode* — it is as little of an ode as it is a rondeau.

The third poem sent to George was a ten line piece, *I had a dove and the sweet dove died*. Keats says he wrote it off "to some Music as it was playing," which fact probably accounts for both its subject and its diction. The last two lines have a certain quaint charm:

> "I kiss'd you oft and gave you white peas —
> Why not live sweetly as in the green trees?"

Two more poems we know to belong to the year 1818, but to just what part of it we are in ignorance. I put them here at the end of the year simply because I can find nothing like an exact date for either of them. The first in point of interest is a three stanza lyric without title, always known by its first line: *Hush, hush! tread softly! hush, hush, my dear*. Charlotte Reynolds told Buxton Forman that the song was composed to a Spanish air which she used to

[1] *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt.

play to Keats. She said that sometimes she played to him for hours. This fact is the chief reason for my putting the poem immediately after *I had a dove*, since it seems more than likely that it was Charlotte Reynolds's playing which had evoked that poem. In the case of *Hush, hush! tread softly!* the words seem to have been absolutely set to the air, for singing purposes. In truth, so lyrical is this little piece, so "singable," that a tune seems bound to belong to it. Alas! The "Spanish air" is forever lost to us. Slight as the song is, it has a haunting quality, and a delicacy which in no way obscures its underlying passion. In the last line but one Keats originally wrote "his soft twin-eggs"; Buxton Forman, not unnaturally, balked at "his" in this connection, but having found two manuscripts of the poem — one in a copy of the *Literary Pocket-book* for 1819, the other in a copy of *Endymion* — he was relieved to discover in the first of these an alternative reading, "her soft brace" which he promptly made use of. Buxton Forman states that the version in the *Endymion* is "evidently later" than the other, and that it corresponds more closely to the text as given by Lord Houghton, but that the holograph lacks the final couplet. I have, however, found still a third version in the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library. It is not in Keats's handwriting, but in Woodhouse's, still Woodhouse undoubtedly copied it from one of Keats's manuscripts. In this Woodhouse copy, the offending "his" gives place to "her." The last line of the poem is Keats, Keats himself, the Keats who loved Fanny Brawne; its very extravagance is a key to his sensations. Whether he wrote the poem before he knew her or not, this was how he felt about her and this sort of thing was his undoing. Here is the couplet:

> "The stock-dove shall hatch her soft twin-eggs and coo,
> While I kiss to the melody, aching all through."

To the people who object to this side of Keats, we can only

say: "Love me, love my dog"; it is a part of him and cannot be ignored.

The second poem which we cannot accurately place is a little fragment published without title. It begins: "Where's the Poet, show him! show him." In the British Museum volume of Keats manuscripts it is dated "1818." I think we can approximate a closer date if we consider the little piece in the light of Keats's letter of October twenty-seventh to Woodhouse, for the poem says practically the same thing as the letter. Keats's answer to the question in his first line is:

> " 'Tis the man who with a man
> Is an equal, be he King,
> Or poorest of the beggar-clan,
> Or any other wondrous thing
> A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato;
> 'Tis the man who with a bird,
> Wren or Eagle, finds his way to
> All its instincts; he hath heard
> The Lion's roaring, and can tell
> What his horny throat expresseth,
> And to him the Tiger's yell
> Comes articulate and presseth
> On his ear like mother-tongue."

The manuscript ends with a line of dots, showing that the poem was discontinued, but not finished. This is not surprising; what was written was far from promising.

There is a third poem, if it can be called such, which, on no evidence at all, I am willing to attribute to this year. Buxton Forman judged it "to belong to the end of 1818 or thereabouts," and although he does not give his reasons for this opinion, I can find no cogent ones for assigning it to a different date. Here, then, we will let it stand. It is a Spenserian stanza, which Keats wrote at the end of Canto II, Book V, in his copy of the *Faerie Queene*. It was first published by Lord Houghton in his 1848 edition, prefaced

by a note in which the editor speaks of Keats's sympathy with Spenser's revolutionary "Gyant," and declares that in this stanza Keats expressed "his conviction of the ultimate triumph of freedom and equality by the power of transmitted knowledge." Professor de Sélincourt comments on both the stanza and Lord Houghton's note upon it by saying: "The lines are interesting as one of the few illustrations in the verse of Keats of his democratic sympathies." This is all very well, but are not both gentlemen taking a mere *jeu d'esprit* a trifle too seriously? Keats's stanza, which seems to me too unimportant to quote here, is, I think, a joking expression of the far-reaching effect of print and how by means of it almost anything may be accomplished. As to Keats's democratic sympathies, I have already shown how little he really considered such matters. His remarks to George about America[1] do not show him in much sympathy with the great democratic experiment of his time. The truth is that all efforts to foist upon Keats a social economic conscience break down before his complete indifference on the subject. Twist his words about how we may, in the very few passages in his letters or his poems which can be made to serve, they are always capable of either another meaning entirely or of being attributable to a very youthful enthusiasm for the political shibboleths of the Hunt school. Ethical, Keats certainly was; and quite as certainly he had no faith in any regeneration of mankind through the medium of political reform. But the main truth is that he lived aside from all such things; his work lay elsewhere.

If Keats were determined to keep himself up to writing, he was no less determined that his walks, talks, tiffs, and makings-up with Fanny Brawne should undermine the general tenor of his life as little as possible. He made an immense effort, but did not entirely succeed. Severn's later recollections always have to be taken with a grain of

[1] See Vol. II, p. 109.

salt, but what he records of this time seems so likely to be true that I think we may believe it to represent the facts without much exaggeration. In Sharp's biography of the painter, we find the following:

> [1] "During the Autumn of 1818 Severn saw little of Keats. When they did meet, he noticed that his friend was distraught and without that look of falcon-like alertness which was so characteristic of him . . . It certainly seemed as though the poet were losing strength and energy, for he ceased to take much interest in intellectual matters, and declared himself unable to take long walks or even indulge in any unnecessary exercise."

Severn may have been thinking of the months which preceded Tom's death. But as he himself was only convalescent from his serious illness in the middle of October, we may take his description as covering the weeks succeeding Tom's death as well as the earlier ones. Probably Keats refused to walk with Severn that he might walk with Fanny Brawne; we know that they were in the habit of strolling on the heath together. Severn is quite wrong as to Keats's lack of interest in "intellectual matters," as we have abundantly seen, but when we remember Severn's teasing propensities, we cannot wonder that Keats shunned him at a time when both patience and spirits were sorely tried. Yet we are indebted to Severn for this description of Keats's appearance, and for recording the apathy which people, even friends, who did not chime with his mood produced in him.

Hazlitt had been lecturing again, this time on the English Comic Writers, but Keats had been too tied down to go and hear him. It shows how cordially Hazlitt had come to regard him that, on one occasion when Keats went to see him at his lodgings in York Street, the older man lent him his lectures, now preparing for the press, to take home

[1] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

with him.[1] We know this from the fact that Keats quotes a long passage from one of the lectures in his December-January letter to George, and the book did not appear until April, 1819.

Keats, meanwhile, had begun to settle down in Wentworth Place, the good postman, Bentley, carrying over his books in a clothes-basket. Then came an invitation from Dilke's father to come with Brown and stay a few days at Chichester; and another from Dilke's sister, Mrs. Snook, to come to Bedhampton after the Chichester visit. Keats tells George: "They say I shall be very much amused. But I don't know — I think I am in too huge a Mind for study — I must do it — I must wait at home and let those who wish come to see me. I cannot always be (how do you spell it?) trapsing."

Keats was slowly regaining his tone; he could even see that the *Quarterly* article was not entirely without a touch of silver lining. "Gifford's attack upon me has done me service," he declares to George, "it has got my book among several *sets*." He also finds that his tastes are widening out: "A year ago I could not understand in the slightest degree Raphael's Cartoons — now I begin to read them a little." One remark which Keats made at this time is illuminating as to the point of view which was beginning to be his. He had been looking at a series of engravings taken from the frescoes of some Italian church. These frescoes were, he says:

> "Full of romance and the most tender feeling . . . But Grotesque to a curious pitch — yet still making up a fine whole — even finer to me than more accomplish'd works — as there was left so much room for Imagination."

In his appreciation of suggestion, Keats joins the moderns; although this, like so many others of his apprehended artistic truths, never got very far into his poetry.

[1] *Life of William Hazlitt*, by P. P. Howe.

This book of engravings Keats had seen at Haydon's. Haydon had been of distinct benefit to him hitherto; but now the man's boundless egotism led him into an act of positive cruelty. He asked Keats for money, as he did everyone else, to be sure, but Keats was not fair game. He had just been through a terrible experience, he was not well (his sore throat had come back), his financial circumstances were not too satisfactory. But did Haydon care? Not a bit. Keats answered by telling him that he had "a sort of fire" in his heart that would "sacrifice every thing" he had to his friend's service, but begged that he "try the long purses" first. It is rather a pathetic letter. Keats admits that he feels in himself "all the vices of a Poet, irritability, love of effect and admiration," after which acknowledgment he goes on to tell Haydon why to lend money just then would be highly inconvenient:

> "I have a little money which may enable me to study, and to travel for three or four years. I never expect to make anything by my Books: and moreover I wish to avoid publishing — I admire Human Nature but I do not like *Men*. I should like to compose things honourable to Man — but not fingerable over by *Men*. So I am anxious to exist with[out] troubling the printer's devil or drawing upon Men's or Women's admiration."

Haydon replied with one of his usual rhapsodies, but left the question of whether or not he would renew his demand in the air.

Tom's death had altered affairs considerably. His allowance was, of course, discontinued, and Keats, who had always lived with his brothers on terms of share and share alike whichever one's money it was at the moment, found himself on very short financial commons. He had spent so much of his own principal that there was very little left, and Abbey declared himself puzzled as to the legal aspects of the case. Since Tom was dead, ought not

his share of the grandmother's legacy to be joined to the grandfather's fund and so not become available until Fanny came of age? For Keats to lend anybody money in the predicament in which he was, was madness; and worse than that, weakness. He simply had not the strength of mind to refuse. On Christmas Eve, he wrote to Taylor, begging the loan of thirty pounds. "Ten I want for myself — and twenty for a friend," he innocently adds, promising to pay by the middle of January. Whether the "friend" were Haydon or not, we cannot tell; either he was not, or Taylor refused the money, for none of it went to Haydon, who continued to importune Keats during the following weeks, and Keats (how he got it, we do not know) was at last able to scrape up thirty pounds for him, a loan which Haydon never repaid. Keats's weakness in the matter of lending money annoyed his more sensible friends as it annoys posterity. At one time, he had over two hundred pounds of bad debts on his hands.

Christmas drew near, and the time for going to Chichester. Keats alleged his sore throat and let Brown go alone. His throat was practically always sore at this time, with only occasional intervals of relief, and still no one guessed the fatal headway which tuberculosis was making.

Just before Christmas, Keats got himself into a little difficulty. He paid a call in Little Britain and discovered that Mrs. Reynolds took it for granted that he was to dine there on Christmas Day, and when he said that he had another engagement, the fact was not taken in too good part. Keats hated to hurt people's feelings, and the Reynoldses were old friends, as his friendships went, so he sat down and wrote a letter of explanation to Mrs. Reynolds. This is surely one of the most awkward epistles on record. Keats was very much flustered, too flustered and determined as to what he intended to do to excuse himself with either tact or plausibility. He assured Mrs. Reynolds that the engagement was a previous one; that he should

not have accepted it, but "kept in Mind old friends," if he had not expected to be in Hampshire on Christmas — a singular reason. He ends in this remarkable manner:

> "I will not speak of the proportion of pleasure I may receive at different Houses — that never enters my head — you may take for a truth that I would have given up even what I did see to be a greater pleasure, for the sake of old acquaintanceship — time is nothing — two years are as long as twenty."

Since he had known the Reynoldses just two years, the inference is obvious. But what about the more important inference, the ill-concealed "greater pleasure"? Where was he dining? Charlotte Reynolds told Buxton Forman that she thought the other invitation was from Mrs. Brawne. It most certainly was, but not until the discovery of the letters of Fanny Brawne of which I have already spoken was it possible to realize the full significance of that evening. I think it is very certain that it was on this Christmas night that Keats and Fanny Brawne became engaged. In one of Miss Brawne's letters is what may very well be an allusion to this fact. She is writing on December thirteenth, 1821:

> "I dined with Mrs. Dilke a day or two ago . . . we dine with them on Christmas day which is like most peoples Christmas days melancholy enough . . . I cannot think it will be much worse than mine for I have to remember that three years ago was the happiest day I had ever then spent."

Three years before was this very Christmas of 1818. Not only do Fanny Brawne's words seem clearly to point to a happiness altogether unusual, entirely beyond any other happiness of any previous days, even of this Autumn, but the evidence of circumstance seems to back up my theory. Keats could not bring himself to go to Chichester until almost the middle of January. To be sure, there was the

sore throat, but that was still with him when he finally went. More than that, there is the *Eve of St. Agnes*, which I think was the direct result of the engagement; and there is the *Ode to Fanny*, which fits so well here that it must be taken into careful consideration.

Perhaps I am wrong in speaking of an engagement, perhaps Fanny Brawne took some time to give her absolute consent. Whatever she may have said to Keats, we know from her letter what she felt, and she must have allowed Keats a considerable measure of hope or the *Eve of St. Agnes* would not have been written. Even supposing the engagement to have been made on that Christmas Day, that is no bar to the ups and downs of their relations during the rest of the Winter. Other lovers have experienced the same difficulties of adjustment, hosts of them. If Fanny Brawne's love for Keats grew stronger and fuller as time went on, it is but another proof that hers was not a shallow nature.

The critics never cease to wonder at Keats's sudden spurt of productiveness, beginning in January with the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and then, after a vacant interval, bursting out in magnificent effervescence with *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, the *Ode to a Nightingale*, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, and the less important odes *To Psyche*, *On Melancholy*, and *On Indolence*. The clue I believe to lie in just the fact of Keats's reciprocated love for Fanny Brawne.

There is no doubt that Keats was a difficult and uncomfortable lover. His self-imposed absences must have been extremely trying. Keats leaves Fanny Brawne for months at a time, and waxes jealous and miserable if she goes out for an evening. Within two weeks of this Christmas Day, he left her for nearly three weeks. Indeed I think Fanny had much to bear.

Keats dined again at the Brawnes', in company with the Dilkes, on the Saturday of the following week. This occasion he slurs over to George by remarking that

"nothing particular passed." Perhaps not, nothing he cared to relate to his family in America, at any rate. But, if George and Georgiana were at all quick of observation, they might have learnt something of the way the wind was blowing from this little straw of an observation which follows immediately upon the "nothing":

> "I never intend hereafter to spend any time with ladies unless they are handsome — you lose time to no purpose. For that reason I shall beg leave to decline going again to Redhall's or Butler's or any Squad where a fine feature cannot be mustered among them all!"

There is no difficulty in reading between the lines here, for Fanny Brawne was, in Keats's eyes, a houri of loveliness. A curious aspect of Keats's state of mind was that he could not rid himself of the feeling that his having fallen in love with Miss Brawne was in some way a disloyalty to his brother and sister-in-law. It is unnecessary to point out how essentially morbid such an idea was, but morbidness and Keats were old companions. Even in the first flush of his acknowledged love, he could write to George and Georgiana:

> "I have no thought pervading me so constantly and frequently as that of you — my Poem cannot frequently drive it away — you will retard it much more than you could by taking up my time if you were in England. I never forget you except after seeing now and then some beautiful woman — but that is a fever — the thought of you both is a passion with me but for the most part a calm one."

How he tortured himself, poor boy! And how he harried Miss Brawne! Let us suppose for a minute what we do not certainly know — that the *Ode to Fanny* was written at this time. Why not? The mood of the poem was almost a chronic one with Keats, it is true; but there are expressions in the *Ode* which show clearly that, at the time he wrote it,

the engagement was a very recent thing. If we recollect that *Hyperion* was balking badly, we shall quite understand the first stanza, and I am positive that the "wintry air" was actual fact. Keats was housed with his throat and knew he must not go out, hence his "Beckon me not into the wintry air." Fanny was evidently going to a dance — a New Year's dance, Buxton Forman suggests — and Keats was not well enough to go with her. The lines which prove the engagement to have been but just made are:

> ". . . do not turn
> The current of your heart from me so soon."

This is from the third stanza; in the seventh, he says again:

> "Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above
> The poor, the fading, brief, pride of an hour;
> . . . . .
> Let none else touch the just new-budded flower."

The theme of the poem may be paraphrased as: Be not too kind to the men with whom you are going to dance tonight, and his plea

> ". . . keep me free,
> From torturing jealousy."

If I am right in thinking that an engagement, or at least what is called an "understanding," had been agreed to between the lovers on Christmas night, the *Ode to Fanny* most certainly belongs to the very end of December or the beginning of January.

The sore throat began to ease a little, and Keats's conscience was not quite comfortable about old Mr. Dilke and the Snooks. Perhaps, too, being himself, he felt the need of rest, of a dull and uneventful interval to soothe the poignance of his sensations. At any rate, to Chichester he went about the middle of January, and from there to the Snooks'. All we know of the exact dates of these visits is

that he told George: "I was nearly a fortnight at Mr. John Snook's and a few days at old Mr. Dilke's," and that he and Brown wrote a composite letter to the Dilkes from Bedhampton on January twenty-fourth, in which Brown reported that he and Keats had walked there from Chichester the day before.

A pleasant little sketch of Keats at this time is contained in a letter which Mrs. Dilke wrote to her father-in-law as a sort of introduction to his expected visitor, whom he had never met. This is what Mrs. Dilke thought it wise to say concerning him to an elderly man who might be a little puzzled at first:

> "You will find him a very odd young man, but good-tempered, and good-hearted, and very clever indeed."

The stigma of "oddness" is the price a myopic world always exacts of genius, but since he was also "good-tempered, and good-hearted," even in the eyes of this same world, we may conceive that he was even odder than Mr. Dilke senior would have been likely to think, for, after all, he was certainly a genius.

Thus Keats wrenched himself away from Fanny Brawne and went down to join Brown at Chichester.

## CHAPTER X

### SWIFT CURRENTS

KEATS was not "very much amused" at Chichester; in fact, he was not amused at all. It could hardly be expected that any young man much in love, who had recently declared himself and been given considerable encouragement, if nothing more, would find any place not in the vicinity of his idol highly amusing; but in this case, Mr. Dilke's method of entertaining his "odd" guest seems even odder than the guest himself. A couple of "dowager Card parties," as Keats calls them, were the sole outings of his "few days" there. We may be sure, however, that he and Brown strolled round the neighbourhood and wandered into the cathedral. Keats dearly loved cathedrals, we have already seen him flying from Margate to Canterbury, and before this year, 1819, is out we shall find him flying again, from the Isle of Wight to Winchester. Chichester cathedral fell in comfortably with a sort of pseudo-mediæval mood which he had fallen into. Why a mediæval mood? one may ask. Well, consider the circumstances a little. Keats had been working on *Hyperion*, with no great impulse, however, if his own general discouragement with his progress on it can be taken as evidence. After the fateful Christmas dinner at the Brawnes', he was less in tune with it than ever, probably. The excitement of his new situation as an accepted, or quasi-accepted, lover turned the current of his thoughts in an entirely different direction. The age of chivalry had always stood to Keats as a symbol of the strength and beauty of love. Its *décor* was to him the perfect setting for romance. The Endymion story had meant a dream of the ideal, but by no effort could it be made to represent the actual. Knights and ladies, on the other hand, were strictly human. They could, without

difficulty, be taken to personify real people. Yet his point of view can hardly be supposed to have been as square-toed as this. Rather he found in the *entourage* and type of thought of chivalric legend something sympathetic and alluring. The over-plus of emotion under which he was labouring, suddenly deflected from its natural outlet of intercourse with Fanny Brawne, sublimated itself into creative energy, and the immediate result was the composition of the *Eve of St. Agnes*.

St. Agnes' Eve is January twentieth, a date which was practically synchronous with Keats's arrival at Chichester. Since he left Chichester on Saturday, January twenty-third, and was there only a "few days," he cannot have been more than at the very beginning of his visit on the twentieth. Woodhouse states[1] that the poem was written "at the suggestion of Mrs. Jones," a remark which has much puzzled Sir Sidney Colvin, and no wonder, since no such person makes her appearance anywhere else in any of the known sources of information as to Keats's life or work. When we remember Keats's habit of concealing real names from the prying curiosity of the indefatigable Woodhouse by substituting imaginary ones in their stead, the puzzle becomes a puzzle no longer, I think. We know nothing of Mrs. Jones, because there is nothing to know; there was no such person. Keats hid the name of the real lady under a conventional Jane Doe pseudonym. There was a lady, but who was she? If we hazard a guess, circumstances leave us hovering between two very possible persons. She was either Mrs. Brawne, or old Mrs. Dilke, she may even have been Fanny Brawne herself, but this I think improbable. Let us take the two chances and weigh them. We will suppose that Keats left Hampstead for Chichester on either Tuesday or Wednesday, January nineteenth or twentieth; it could not have been much earlier, as we have seen. Undoubtedly his last evening before starting was spent in

[1] Woodhouse Commonplace Book (*Poems II*). Crewe Collection.

company with the Brawnes. Somehow the conversation may have turned on St. Agnes' Eve. "You will be away on St. Agnes' Eve," or "Why, you are going down on St. Agnes' Eve," are remarks which, in such a case, may very well have been made, leading to a subsequent narration by Mrs. Brawne of the well-known legend, with the suggestion that it would make a good plot for Keats. So much for the Mrs. Brawne theory. As to Mrs. Dilke, if Keats did actually arrive at Chichester on St. Agnes' Eve, a family so steeped in antiquarian lore as the Dilkes are most likely to have mentioned the day, and this conjecture holds good even if he had arrived the day before. On the whole, I am inclined to consider the Mrs. Brawne theory as the most tenable on two accounts. The first is that Keats had every possible reason for not mentioning Mrs. Brawne's name to Woodhouse; his secretiveness in regard to his intimacy with the Brawnes with people who did not know them would have forced him to this, while, in the case of old Mrs. Dilke, only a sense of fitness could have induced him to obscure her identity. The second account is that Mrs. Brawne would have been much more likely to have suggested that Keats try his hand at a poem on the subject than old Mrs. Dilke, who had known him only a scant twenty-four hours or so. Young Mrs. Dilke at Wentworth Place is a third possibility, but as Keats's familiar footing in Dilke's house was known to everybody, there seems no reason why he should have objected to mentioning her to Woodhouse. Mrs. Brawne, then, I think it undoubtedly was to whom Keats owed the suggestion that he write a poem on St. Agnes' Eve.

Packed up with his clothes and brushes and other things in the portmanteau which Keats carried with him to Chichester was some of the thin oblong paper which Haslam had given him to write to America upon. Perhaps Keats intended to start a letter to George while he was gone. However that may have been, it was not as a letter to George

that the oblong sheets in the portmanteau were to serve, they were destined for a more important fate, for on them, in the dull and quiet moments surrounding the "dowager Card parties," Keats wrote a part, or sketched the whole, of the first draft of the *Eve of Saint Agnes*. His own account of the proceeding sent later to George is as follows:

> "I took down some thin paper and wrote on it a little poem call'd St. Agnes' Eve, which you shall have as it is when I have finished the blank part of the rest for you."

From his speaking of "the *blank* part of the rest," it seems clear that the poem was not even finished in skeleton form until after his return to Hampstead. Lord Houghton, who probably had the information direct from Brown, says that the poem "was begun on a visit to Hampshire, at the commencement of this year [1819] and finished on his return to Hampstead." The manuscript of the first draft is still in existence.[1] I, who have handled it many times, can testify to the thinness of the oblong paper. That sheets of such extreme frailty should have lasted intact for a hundred years is due simply to the fact that they have had but four owners during the time. This manuscript was one of the many that fell into Severn's hands on Keats's death. There never seems to have been any regular distribution of Keats's belongings. Brown, in England, divided Keats's books among his friends in a rough and ready fashion, allotting to each friend such volumes as each had given the poet, returning lent copies to their rightful owners, and as to the rest, giving some away and keeping the remainder himself. Others of Keats's circle appear simply to have appropriated to themselves whatever relics of Keats they happened to have. Severn evidently regarded himself as heir to such papers as Keats had carried to Rome. Severn certainly meant well in constituting himself the guardian

[1] Author's Collection. Locker-Lampson manuscript referred to by Buxton Forman.

of these papers, but his kind-hearted simplicity has proved most unfortunate to posterity. For Severn, in his delight at the constantly increasing number of Keats's admirers, could not bring himself to refuse requests made to him for "something in the poet's handwriting," and to meet these demands he took to cutting up long manuscripts and giving them away a few lines at a time. One of the copies of *Otho the Great* was mutilated in this way, as was also the *Pot of Basil*. This manuscript of the *Eve of St. Agnes* lacks the first seven stanzas, or the first original sheet. It has been suggested that the sheet was separated from the rest to point out a mistake in the proof which Keats referred to in a letter of June eleventh, 1820, to Taylor. But since Woodhouse had already made a transcript of the poem for his Commonplace Book, which was always at Taylor's service for consultation,[1] since also the mistake which Keats desired corrected was perfectly clear without any reference to the manuscript, it seems far more likely that the separation of the first sheet from the others was due to one of Severn's blundering kindnesses. Whatever occurred, no trace of this missing sheet has yet been found, although the letter to Taylor has been preserved.[2]

The sources of the *Eve of St. Agnes* have occupied commentators not a little. Some of the suggestions made have been strangely fantastic, as is inevitable, for rare indeed is the commentator who is content with a simple solution to any query. Leigh Hunt, who reprinted the poem entire in his *London Journal* on January twenty-first, 1835, interpolating between the stanzas a most interesting running commentary, and reprinted the whole again in his volume *Imagination and Fancy*, published in 1845, is quite content with citing the old and well-known legend in this connection. The rites proper to be performed on St. Agnes' Eve were probably as familiar to earlier generations of English-speaking people as are those of All Hallowe'en to ours.

[1] Buxton Forman. [2] Author's Collection.

The commentator who should seek far afield for the source of a poem dealing with the ceremonies of the latter night would, I think, be treated to an amused smile. Even supposing that Keats needed any source other than the conversation with "Mrs. Jones," there was popular rumour and the day itself. I cannot leave this aspect of the poem, however, without just glancing at two of the most recent suggestions as to source. They are both ingenious, but each is, I believe, beside the mark, although for very different reasons.

The first of these suggestions was made some seventeen years ago by Dr. Henry Noble MacCracken.[1] It is to the effect that certain analogies to the *Eve of St. Agnes* are to be found in Boccaccio's early prose romance, *Il Filocolo*. To my mind, these analogies are by no means so cogent as they seem to Dr. MacCracken, and for a very simple reason: every one of them belongs to the stock in trade of romantic narrative and is almost as much a commonplace of the type as is the existence of a love episode itself. In *Il Filocolo*, the two lovers, Florio and Biancofiori, he a Moorish prince of Spain, she a Christian damsel, are brought up together, but later separated. Their childish affection for each other has ripened into passion with the years, and their enforced separation is a great grief to both. On one occasion, Florio learns that Biancofiori is shut up with her ladies in an impregnable tower. On the eve of a festival, he manages to get himself conveyed into the tower hidden in a basket of roses. Emerging therefrom, he throws himself on the mercy of Biancofiori's aged attendant, Glorizia, begging her to get him speech with her mistress. Glorizia promises to hide him in Biancofiori's bed-curtains. She then seeks out Biancofiori and invents a fictitious dream in which, she tells the lady, she beheld Florio entering Biancofiori's chamber while she slept. Biancofiori, much comforted by the dream, mingles in the festivities, al-

[1] *The Source of Keats's 'Eve of St. Agnes,'* in *Modern Philology*. Vol. V. 1907–1908.

though she cannot conceal her melancholy mood. Evening arrived, and Florio duly conducted to his hiding place, Biancofiori comes into the chamber, where, assisted by Glorizia, she undresses, the old crone taking care to keep her impatience for Florio at stretch by suggesting that he may perchance come, that he may not, in short that either event is possible, but that neither can be predicted. Biancofiori at last in bed, Glorizia leaves her, and after a time the lady falls into a troubled sleep from which she is soon aroused by Florio making impassioned love to her. As he does so, two magic carbuncles suddenly glow with a soft light, causing the chamber to become as bright as day. Biancofiori, who has been dreaming the actual scene, cannot at first reconcile herself to an awakening which she hardly comprehends to be a realization. Florio finally convinces her that the fact and the dream are identical. The lovers vow themselves to each other, a ring is exchanged, and the night is passed in complete understanding and mutual satisfaction.

Boiled down to absolute resemblance, what do these parallels amount to? Next to nothing, really. A young man and a young woman are deeply in love with each other, but separated by untoward circumstances. Keats's untoward circumstances take the form of a family feud dividing their two houses. Keats need only have thought for a moment of *Romeo and Juliet* to have conceived that much of his plot, and the old attendant as go-between is but a duplicate of the nurse in Shakespeare's play and in any one of a dozen old romances. A lover concealed in his lady's chamber is part of the machinery of romantic narration the world over, and Keats's method of handling the scene is as unlike Boccaccio's in *Il Filocolo* as can well be imagined. Keats's lovers flee away into the night together. Nothing of the sort happens in *Il Filocolo*. It has been suggested that the magic carbuncles duplicate Keats's moonlight through the stained glass window. But why? Keats needed

no carbuncles to remind him of the moon. We know that he was reading the old Spanish romance, *Palmerin of England*, in Southey's translation just about this time, and I have already shown how many were the purely colour passages he underscored in that book.[1]

It will be seen, therefore, that this whole episode from *Il Filocolo* bears only the very vaguest resemblance to the structure of the *Eve of St. Agnes*. As to the question of whether Keats could ever have read, or been told of, *Il Filocolo*, I think we must accord it a decided negative. At the time Keats wrote the *Eve of St. Agnes*, he could not read Italian. He read the *Decameron* in an English translation,[2] and Dante in the translation of the Rev. H. F. Cary. In the following September, Keats had started to read a little Italian, beginning with Ariosto, "not managing more than six or seven stanzas at a time," but that he had reached any such point by the beginning of the year, that he had even looked at an Italian book with a view to reading it at that date, there seems no possible reason for supposing. And why on earth should he have wanted to read this extremely dull early work of Boccaccio when there were so many better books which he might have read? For in the original he must have read it, if he read it at all, since there was no English translation, and only a French seventeenth century one which there is no reason to believe he had ever come across. More cogent than mere speculation on the subject is the fact that Hunt suggests no such source for the poem, and he himself was the most likely person to have turned Keats's attention to *Il Filocolo* if there had been any turning at all, which it seems perfectly evident there was not. Boccaccio took parts of his tale from the old French romance, *Florice et Blanchefleur*. It would take more study than I propose to give to the subject to deter-

[1] See Vol. I, p. 103; also Appendix C.

[2] Sir Sidney Colvin quotes Woodhouse to the effect that the translation read by Keats was that published by Allen Awnmarch. Fifth Edition. 1624.

mine where Boccaccio departed from, and where he kept to, his original. Suffice it to say that a fragmentary English mediæval version of the romance, quoted by George Ellis in his *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romance* published in 1806, a book which Keats may have read, contains none of the particular incidents upon which Dr. MacCracken bases his theory. In the light of all this, I think we may dismiss Dr. MacCracken's speculation as interesting, but without a leg to stand on.

The second suggestion of source which I have mentioned was made three or four years ago by Miss Martha Hale Shackford.[1] Miss Shackford considers that she has found certain close scenic and verbal parallels between Keats's poem and Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*. And the truth is she has found them; but, owing to the perfectly unrelated manner in which she has been obliged to cull them from Mrs. Radcliffe's novel, they prove nothing more than a vein of reminiscence, if I may so express it. Miss Shackford presents her theory with perfect temperateness and common sense, and without demanding more for it than it will bear. The only question is whether it can be made to bear anything at all of real importance. It is quite true, as Miss Shackford says that:

> "The setting of Mrs. Radcliffe's story possessed many elements that seemed revived by Keats. There was the solid grandeur of an ancient Gothic castle, with shadowy galleries, mysterious staircases, moonlit casements, and gorgeous apartments hung with arras glowing with medieval pageantry. The feudal life with old retainers serving an arrogant master and his carousing friends is pictured in both works."

Yet there is an essential difference here, for Mrs. Radcliffe's story is laid frankly in the eighteenth century, its mediæ-

[1] *The Eve of St. Agnes and the Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Martha Hale Shackford. Reprinted from the *Publication of the Modern Language Association of America*. Vol. XXXVI. No. 1. 1921.

valism is pure *pastiche*, while Keats's tale is chivalric legend throughout.

For the midnight scene in the chapel in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, Miss Shackford finds striking resemblances in two widely separated scenes in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*, one in Chapter VIII, the other in Chapter XXXI. For various references to the old woman in the poem, there are others to an old woman in Chapter XLIII and XLIV of the novel. The young woman guiding the old woman down the staircase in *St. Agnes* is very closely tallied in the last of these chapters, but the errands which bring about this parallel of events are entirely different.

Miss Shackford cites as important the journey through winding passages to a room, and indeed the analogies here are rather striking. In Stanza XIII of the poem, Porphyro

> . . follow'd through a lowly arched way,"

and eventually

> ". . . found him in a little moonlight room
> Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb."

And in Stanza XXI are these lines:

> ". . . . Safe at last
> Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
> The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd and chaste.'

In Chapter XXXII of *Udolpho* we read: "I have only to go . . . along the vaulted passage and across the great hall and up the marble staircase, and along the north gallery and through the west wing of the castle, and I am in the corridor in a minute," and another passage of much the same purport appears two chapters farther on. While toward the beginning of *Udolpho* there are several resemblances: "As she passed along the wide and empty galleries, dusky and silent, she felt forlorn and appre-

hensive"; and again, some hundred pages earlier, "the lattices were thrown back, and showed . . . the moonlight landscape"; and twenty pages beyond this, "The couches and drapery of the lattices were of pale green silk, embroidered and fringed with green and gold."

Now these are slight things, and I do not think can be properly called parallels at all, yet there is an atmosphere in them which, taken apart from the special atmosphere of Mrs. Radcliffe's book, does connote the atmosphere of Keats's poem. It is as though Keats found lying round in his mind certain knick-knacks and sparkling trinkets dropped from an old dismantled image which when furbished up and set to a new and different use prove most acceptable additions to an already ordered scheme.

Miss Shackford gives various references to stained glass windows, one of which

> ". . . by the blunted light
> That the dim moon through painted casements lends"

is not from *Udolpho* at all, but from another book of Mrs. Radcliffe's, *The Emigrants*. There are also various references to lutes, and to the sound of singing. One line of *St. Agnes:*

> "And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old"

Miss Shackford considers "very subtly related, possibly, to a verse quoted in an early chapter of the romance, about a landscape,

> 'Beauty sleeping in the lap of horror.'"

I wonder if this is such an unusual metaphor as Miss Shackford thinks, it does not seem so to me.

I wish I had space to quote more of Miss Shackford's analogies, but I have given enough to show how she has determined her parallels. To find verbal verisimilitudes between a poem three hundred and seventy-eight lines long

and a four volume novel was a task requiring unflagging zeal and bright enthusiasm, and Miss Shackford has certainly proved how deeply the *Mysteries of Udolpho* had sunk into Keats's mind. Whether this was all reminiscence from an earlier reading, a reminiscence which sprang into life when contemplating the special scenery which he needed for *St. Agnes*, or whether it derived from a recent re-reading of the romance, there is no telling, but it does seem as though there were too many verbal echoes to leave the whole matter to recollection. For instance, Mrs. Radcliffe says: "Silver tripods, depending from chains of the same metal, illumined the apartment"; Keats writes:

> "A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door."

Keats's old nurse exclaims: "Well-a-well-a-day!" Theresa, in *Udolpho*, uses the same exclamation in a slightly different form, "A-well-a-day." Keats puts: "By all the saints I swear"; Mrs. Radcliffe has: "You must promise me by all the saints."

In the slang of the day, Miss Shackford "started something" with her theory, but what she started was not precisely what she expected it to be. For, closely as certain effects, certain expressions, certain scenic properties from Mrs. Radcliffe's book seem to have stuck in Keats's mind, deftly as he appropriated these effects, these expressions, these properties to his own use whenever he needed them, it was always something indubitably his own that they were made to serve. In any other than the most fragmentary and superficial sense there is no slightest resemblance between the *Eve of St. Agnes* and the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Not in plot, touch, nor temper are the two books in the least alike. Miss Shackford has shown us that Keats was far more familiar with Mrs. Radcliffe's works than had been supposed, that is the principal result of her inquiry. The way in which Keats's mind hugged impressions is finely demonstrated in her paper, as too is his

remarkable way of divorcing subsidiary impressions from a total effect, so making it possible for him to separate the single from the general, the essential from the unimportant, that which was suggestive to him from that with which he had no concern. Taken thus, as a quarry, the *Mysteries of Udolpho* may well be reckoned as one of the books which had considerable to do with Keats's imaginative development. Looked at from this angle, Miss Shackford's paper is of great value; seen from the viewpoint of a possible "source" for *St. Agnes*, in the generally accepted meaning of that term, her researches lead practically nowhere.

As a matter of fact, Keats probably owed as much of the peculiar atmosphere of his poem to Coleridge's *Christabel* as to the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Even some of Miss Shackford's particular parallels are duplicated in *Christabel*. There are the hanging lamps, for instance, which I have already cited, and which in *Christabel* become

"The lamp with twofold silver chain."

In *Udolpho*, Emily has a favourite dog who follows her and barks; Keats brings in a "wakeful bloodhound"; Coleridge has a "mastiff bitch." Keats's debt to *Christabel* was very possibly a conscious one; his debt to the *Mysteries of Udolpho* was in all likelihood quite unconscious. For Keats experienced books as most people experience life, and his leanings upon Mrs. Radcliffe seem to have assumed to him something of the form of a childhood recollection not completely risen to the plane of thought. At the same time, we must not forget that the *Mysteries of Udolpho* was almost certain to have been on old Mr. Dilke's shelves, and Keats may have been moved to glance through it again in an idle moment, without any conscious connection between it and his poem; the result of such re-reading would be to stir up forgotten pools of memory of which he himself would scarcely be aware.

The *Eve of St. Agnes* is one of those poems, often among

the most beautiful, which spring out of reading. It is written in the Spenserian stanza, and contains more than one reference to Spenser. Here are bits of Cary's *Dante*; suggestions of the Elizabethans; chips of Chatterton; a fragment of Burton; a little flash from Shakespeare. For all these strands of reminiscence I must refer my readers to Buxton Forman's and Professor de Sélincourt's editions. Extraordinarily interesting as these things are, I cannot dwell too long upon them here. It is high time that we returned to the poem itself, and to its subject, which is its one indisputable source — the legend of St. Agnes' Eve.

Leigh Hunt adduces Brand's *Popular Antiquities* as a convenient book in which to read of the legend. This work, first published in 1813 in an edition of two quarto volumes edited by Sir Henry Ellis after Brand's manuscript notes, was probably well known to Keats. In it is given a brief sketch of the legend proper, and a much longer commentary on the popular superstitions and ceremonies which had grown up about it. St. Agnes was a Roman virgin, a convert to Christianity, who was sentenced to suffer martyrdom in the tenth persecution under the Emperor Diocletian, A.D. 306. According to the legend, "She was condemned to be debauched in the public stews before her execution, but her virginity was miraculously preserved by thunder and lightning.[1] Not long after her death, her parents, going to pray at her tomb, saw in a vision a host of angels with their dead daughter in the midst, and a lamb standing beside her as white as snow, an emblem of her spotless purity. With the centuries, St. Agnes assumed in the popular mind a special tenderness toward pure young girls, and took them under her protection to the extent of according them the power of seeing their future husbands in a dream on one night of the year, the eve of the day sacred to her. Certain rites had to be performed preparatory to the receiving of this boon, of which the principal seems

[1] Brand's *Popular Antiquities*.

to have been that the girl who courted St. Agnes' favour must fast all day and go to bed fasting, and must not kiss man, woman, or child until her dream lover broke the fast with her. This was called "fasting St. Agnes' fast." The young girl must lie on her back with her arms clasped beneath her head, and falling asleep in this position she will dream that a man is standing beside her bed, and that man she will marry. These rites differ somewhat in different places, and Brand gives one or two variants of them, but as the one I have given was the one followed by Keats we need not concern ourselves with the others. Among many quotations which show the prevalence of the custom, Brand prints some lines from Ben Jonson's *Satyr*, which were probably familiar to Keats. They are:

> "And on sweet St. Anna's[1] night
> Please you with the promis'd sight,
> Some of husbands, some of lovers,
> Which an empty dream discovers."

To see one's love in a dream, and know that however many ups and downs the waking course of true love is obliged to undergo the desired end will certainly be accomplished eventually, must have been a very sympathetic idea to Keats, enduring his first separation from Fanny Brawne. His whole soul was in *St. Agnes' Eve*; his humanity and his genius sublimating themselves through the longing of separation into a finely tempered whole. This is Keats's first completely successful long poem, and the first of his narratives not disfigured by glaring immaturities. Perhaps Hunt is not far wrong when he says: "Among his finished productions, however, of any length, the *Eve of St. Agnes* still appears to me the most delightful and complete specimen of his genius." And he goes on: "It is young, but

[1] Professor de Sélincourt points out that Ben Jonson probably changed the name "Agnes" to "Anna" out of compliment to Queen Anne, for whose entertainment the Masque of *The Satyr* was performed.

full-grown poetry of the rarest description; graceful as the beardless Apollo; glowing and gorgeous with the colours of romance." Hunt's expression here is a little florid, but has he not gone to the core of the matter? And Hunt knew what he was talking about, no man better. Here is what he has to say of Keats's technique: "Let the student of poetry observe, that in all the luxury of the Eve of St. Agnes there is nothing of the conventional craft of artificial writers; no heaping up of words or similes for their own sakes or for the rhyme's sake; no gaudy common-places; no borrowed airs of earnestness; no tricks of inversion; no substitution of reading or of ingenious thoughts for feeling or spontaneity: no irrelevancy or unfitness of any sort. All flows out of sincerity and passion. The writer is as much in love with the heroine as the hero is; his description of the painted window, however gorgeous, has not an untrue or superfluous word; and the only speck of a fault in the whole poem arises from an excess of emotion."

An excess of emotion there certainly is in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, but however much of a fault that may be in certain types of poetry — and unquestionably controlled emotion is generally far more effective than that which is over-expressed — in this particular poem I cannot regard it as a fault. The poem is singularly homogeneous in texture. It is all one long sensuous utterance. Not sensual — it is never that — but lyrical. It is an expression of lyrical emotion presented in the form of a tale. In it, Keats writes as poet and astounding craftsman. Every scrap of effectual knowledge which he knew he wrought into it; his feeling for colour, his sensitiveness to verbal music, his power of condensed suggestion, these are all here. His very profusion is a part of his effect. No one of Keats's manuscripts which I have seen is so carefully worked over as this. A glance at the reproduction of two of the pages of the first draft will show how shrewdly and carefully he shaped and reshaped his material, always with the object

of increasing some splendour, making clearer some manner of feeling, adding some brighter lustre to an image, captivating the ear with some stranger, more unexpected, harmony of sound. This was Keats following his own advice tendered to Shelley a year and a half later to "load every rift with ore." His mood was the antithesis of astringent. His prime care was to give his emotion full rein, only endeavoring to keep the expression of it to the level of his best achievement, and in this he signally succeeded. To those people who are forever condemning the sensuous aspect of Keats's conception of love, there is but one answer. That sensuous beauty of this kind is its own perfect excuse, and we already know that natural beauty of all sorts stood to Keats as a religion, or, at least, as the sole possible way of expressing the truths which were religion to him. *St. Agnes' Eve* was a great choral hymn written to celebrate his love for Fanny Brawne. To say that he had to be separated from her to bring it into existence, is merely to state a truism of the functioning of the creative faculty. Poetry is seldom written in the midst of an action or a state of being; reflection is its essence. It is the perfume of something which has been, but is not; a remembrance and a hope, but a fact no longer.

I suppose that few poems in the English language are so well known and so much loved as the *Eve of St. Agnes*. It stands as a personal efflorescence to generation after generation of young people. This is a poem for youth, and youth alone is capable of appraising it. As we grow older, we may come to prefer others of Keats's poems to it, but to the age to which it appeals it is completely satisfying, and little more praise can be given to any poem than this. Browning has spoken of "the last of life for which the first was made," a consoling idea to those who see life constantly shortening in front of them; but was he right? I fear not. Youth is more than age, energy worth more than meditation. The *Eve of St. Agnes* is a pæan of youth, a great

masterpiece and epitome of one of the principal ages of man.

I call the *Eve of St. Agnes* a "choral hymn" and I do so advisedly, for its effect is not single and melodic, but massed and contrapuntal, and this double effect is kept up throughout. In the first place, there is the environment and the time set with the extreme of clarity in the opening stanzas of the poem: the freezing Winter night, outside the castle; inside, the chill chapel with the monuments of dead knights and ladies who seem to "ache in icy hoods and mails." The cold night is made none the less bitter by the draughty gusts of loud music which sweep along the corridors, and this metallic music, this piercing sound of "silver, snarling trumpets," gains an added touch of magnificence and chill from its juxtaposition to the sculptured architraves from which

> "The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
> Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
> With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts."

This, which we may call the motif of night, and cold, and heartless splendour, is never allowed to sink out of consciousness for very long; even when the love motif itself is in full swing, in the scene between Porphyro and Madeline in Madeline's chamber, suddenly across the silence

> "The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
> The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet,
> Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
> The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone."

And it follows through to the end of the poem, in the description of the arras which lines the passages along which the lovers flee,

> "Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar,"

in the drunken Porter asleep "in uneasy sprawl," in the "wakeful blood-hound," in the "foot-worn stones" of the hall, and the door groaning upon its hinges.

The second theme of the poem is the story of Porphyro and Madeline, with its symbols of the fast and the subsequent supper, as lightly and delicately tinted as the great hall is grey with sculptured stone and garish with plumes and flashing armour. Throughout the poem, Keats plays two sets of impressions, of emotions, against each other. To the sound of the kettle-drums and metallic wind instruments, he opposes strings, the strings of a lute. Against the

> ". . argent revelry
> With plume, tiara, and all rich array,"

in the "thronged resort" of the great hall, he sets the "pallid moonshine" of the little still chamber, and the faint, beautiful colours thrown by the moonlit window. Never was riot more skilfully made to enhance silence. The world, and the soul; the life of outward seeming and inward fruition — no allegory, but a provable and proven fact.

But the *Eve of St. Agnes* is more than simply choral, it is antiphonal as well. For Keats, even in the heyday of his love experience, could not quite shake off his natural morbidness. Sinister, cynical, the mutter of death shudders always just beneath the surface of the tale. The lovers are happy, but beside them in the castle death sweeps upon its prey. Angela, the Beadsman, both die; the storm which protects the flight of the lovers howls round the castle suddenly become a tomb. It is the old story of the cruelty of nature.[1] For two who are happy, life demands the insatiable toll of death. It is no mere charming tale of love which Keats has written here, but a profoundly dramatic study of an unplumbed mystery. And it is on this note that Keats ends his poem.

[1] See Vol. I, p. 614.

*St. Agnes' Eve* is so familiar to all readers of poetry that any detailed description of it seems unnecessary. Nevertheless, there are a few little points which I wish to touch upon before we finish with it for the moment. One thing which should be carefully noted is the extraordinary way in which Keats was able to stay the movement of composition in order to correct his impulse. This is a very difficult thing to do, and yet, in this instance, much alteration, and several false starts, do not seem to have lessened the vigour, the *élan*, of his creative power in the slightest degree. A careful study of the two pages which I have reproduced will teach a student more of the marvellous way in which Keats was capable of holding to the thread of his unconscious creation, while at the same time consciously employing his critical faculty, than pages of explanation could do. All these variations and changes are reproduced by Buxton Forman,[1] but only by seeing them set down as Keats, in the hurry of composition, wrote them, can we really comprehend how, and why, they came to his mind.

The stanzas about the window are in many ways the finest in the poem. What if Keats did make the mistake of supposing that moonlight was strong enough to transmit the colour values of stained glass, does it matter a jot? Would any one wish these stanzas away because they are false to fact? The truth of art is not necessarily the truth of nature. Where a poet has made undeniable beauty, the critic does well who refrains from applying a rule of thumb.

Hunt has pointed out what appears a distinct weakness in Stanza XXV, where Keats says that Porphyro, looking at Madeline kneeling beneath the moonlit window, "grew faint" at the sight of her purity and loveliness. Hunt did not apparently know that this faintness was part and parcel of romance narrative, and that Keats was merely following a very old model in introducing it, but, leaving that aside,

[1] *The Complete Works of John Keats*, Edited by H. Buxton Forman. 5 vols. Gowans & Gray. Glasgow, 1900–1901.

what Hunt has to say on this subject is absolute truth, and should be taken into consideration by every reader:

> "He had, at the time of his writing this poem, the seeds of a mortal illness in him, and he, doubtless, wrote as he had felt, for he was also deeply in love; and extreme sensibility struggled in him with a great understanding."

That last clause might be taken as a motto for Keats's life.

Some years ago, there was a good deal of controversy in the newspapers as to the exact meaning of the line:

> "Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray."

What the various proponents of certain ingenious guesses said, is of no moment, for what Keats meant was assuredly known to Hunt, who explains the line in this way:

> "Clasp'd like a missal in a land of *Pagans*: that is to say, where Christian prayer-books must not be seen, and are, therefore, doubly cherished for the danger."

A single one of these newspaper epistles made a valuable suggestion, however. I quote a part of this letter:

> [1] "In seeking for the source of Keats's line in the 'Eve of St. Agnes,'
>
> 'Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray,'
>
> it may be well to ask whether the poet was not referring to a particular book. If a certain missal was much written and talked about in literary circles at this time, and if further it was a missal that had been used by Christians dwelling among the swart paynims (all of whom, as good Mohammedans, are pretty regular in their praying), there is a chance that this was the book that touched the poet's imagination and supplied the simile.
>
> As it happens, a copy of a missal which meets these conditions is now in the British Museum. It appears in the catalogue as '*Missale mixtum secundum regulam beati*

[1] From a letter by Professor Fred Newton Scott, University of Michigan, in the *New York Evening Post*, May 3, 1911.

*I'sidori dictum Mozarabes . . . In regali civitate Toleti*, 1500.' The character of this missal, and its repute among book fanciers of Keats's time, are indicated by [certain] notes upon Lord Spencer's copy at Althorp, in T. F. Dibdin's '*Bibliotheca Spenceriana*' . . .

. . . . . .

That Keats actually saw either Dibdin's work or the missal itself there is, as far as I know, no proof, although it is not greatly straining probability to suppose that he saw both. Keats was in 1818–19 often at the house of Charles Wentworth Dilke, and it may be that he saw Dibdin's work in Dilke's library. I put the question some time ago in a letter to the late Sir Charles Dilke and received from him the following reply:

'Alas! I can't be sure, but I *think* I remember that this book was either at Belmont Castle (my great aunt's) or at Chichester. My great-grandfather's books, etc., were divided between my great uncle and his sister. I took from both libraries the books of my great-grandfather which had his book plate, but it is *not* among them.'"

It is so extremely likely that Keats should have seen Dibdin's *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* at one of these two houses, since it, like all Dibdin's books, was extremely popular with antiquarians, that I think Professor Scott's suggestion should not be left hidden in the files of a newspaper. When we consider the strangeness of Keats's simile, a quasi-clue of this sort is not to be slighted.

One more thing I wish my readers to notice. The gradual increasing and brightening of the colours as the love-scene continues, and the marvellous way in which these colours are managed. From the lights of the window, the symbol is continued through the banquet; but the window tints are stated, the hues of the fruits merely implied, it would have marred both effects to have duplicated the technique employed in them. The window colours and the colour of the table-cloth are "flat," given simply as themselves; the fruits are heightened by inference, they are full,

rounded, literary, if you like, and this change in the method of presentation sets them before us in the most excellent relief. From this moment, the room becomes warm with "perfume light." It is a beautiful conceit to have Porphyro think of these colours — the "lustrous salvers" gleaming in the moonlight, the "golden fringe" of the table-cover lying upon the carpet — as almost noisy in their effect, as though so much brilliance must wake Madeline.

It has been the fashion to condemn Keats's "carpets." Unnecessary preciosity! Carpets were known in Europe even before the assumed period of Keats's poem.[1] They seem to have been chiefly used for ladies' bowers, so that the presence of one in Madeline's chamber was entirely according to custom. As to those in the corridors, there is no absolute reason to condemn them, but it is quite possible to conclude that Keats here used the word "carpet" in its sense of "covering," and meant to imply woven rushes rather than woven stuffs.

The colour symbols having served their turn, Keats quenches them with the setting of St. Agnes' moon and the beginning of the elfin storm. Admirable indeed is Keats's manipulation of his various themes and meanings in the last five stanzas of the poem. Even at the very moment when we are told of Porphyro that "into her dream he melted," at that very instant come the words:

> "... meantime the frost-wind blows
> Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
> Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set."

The dream is over, reality has begun. Past death, misunderstanding, the imprisonment of personality, the lovers escape toward life together, not into a live-happy-ever-after kind of existence, but into the stress and storm of a future which at least they face side by side.

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica.* Eleventh Edition.

Begun at Chichester, continued undoubtedly at Bedhampton, and gone on with, we know, after Keats's return to Hampstead, the *Eve of St. Agnes* did not receive its final revisions until the following Autumn at Winchester.

On Saturday, January twenty-third, Keats and Brown left old Mr. Dilke's and walked over to Bedhampton to the Snooks', a distance of ten miles; although they reached the Snooks' house by three, Brown records that they found dinner already over. In the same paragraph in which he mentions this disappointing fact, Brown tells Mrs. Dilke that "Keats is much better, owing to a strict forbearance from a third glass of wine." The reference to the wine is a joke, yet it seems to have been a fact that Keats's sore throat was a little better during the first days of his stay away from home. But the improvement was short-lived. On his return to Hampstead, he wrote his sister: "At Bedhampton I was unwell and did not go out of the Garden Gate but twice or thrice during the fortnight I was there." A singular excursion provided by his hosts for Monday, the twenty-fifth, the second day after his arrival, was a distinct imprudence for Keats, undertaken, as it was, in the rain. A famous Jew converter, the Rev. Mr. Lewis Way, who lived at Stanstead House near Racton in Sussex, had built a chapel in his park, and the chapel was to be consecrated on that day with the Bishops of Gloucester and St. Davids officiating. Why such an occasion should have been expected to interest Keats, is a query. To be sure, Mr. Way bore the remarkable reputation of having visited all the chief rabbis from Rotterdam to Moscow in his efforts at proselytizing. It had taken him nearly a year to accomplish this feat, and he was become a distinct celebrity in local and church circles thereby. To the consecration, in duty bound, Keats went, "Brown, I, and John Snook the boy . . . in a chaise behind a leaden horse. Brown drove, but the horse did not mind him." We can imagine the soggy roads, the trio crushed beneath the pulled-over hood of the

chaise, the everlasting slow plod of the horse, the smell of damp leather and steaming horseflesh, the occasional low branch catching the chaise top and showering a sudden volley of little drops inside. It was a depressing drive, and to Keats a depressing occasion. It aroused all his spleen toward established religious organizations. This sort of thing was the negation of religion to him, it irritated him beyond measure and he let himself go about it in a letter to George written soon after he got back to town:

> "The consecration was — not amusing. There were numbers of carriages — and his house crammed with clergy. They sanctified the chapel, and it being a wet day, consecrated the burial-ground through the vestry window. I begin to hate parsons; they did not make me love them that day, when I saw them in their proper colours. A parson is a Lamb in a drawing-room, and a Lion in a vestry. The notions of Society will not permit a parson to give way to his temper in any shape — so he festers in himself — his features get a peculiar, diabolical, self-sufficient, iron stupid expression. He is continually acting — his mind is against every man, and every man's mind is against him. He is an hypocrite to the Believer and a coward to the unbeliever. He must be either a knave or an idiot — and there is no man so much to be pitied as an idiot parson. The soldier who is cheated into an Esprit de Corps by a red coat, a band, and colours, for the purpose of nothing, is not half so pitiable as the parson who is led by the nose by the bench of bishops and is smothered in absurdities — a poor necessary subaltern of the Church."

Keats's opinion of the clergy had recently received a severe set-back from his learning of the sudden and unexpected engagement of his friend Bailey to Miss Hamilton Gleig, the daughter of Bishop Gleig, and the sister of his intimate friend. I have spoken of this event before;[1] we are concerned with it now merely as it affected Keats. The unfortunate character of this affair was due simply to the fact

[1] See Vol. I, pp. 478–479.

that Bailey had gone to Scotland the declared, although not the accepted, suitor of Marianne Reynolds. Looking at the matter from this distance of time, it seems a little fantastic to hold a man bound to a woman who had definitely refused him. But middle-class etiquette in such matters was very severe in the England of the early nineteenth century. Keats was profoundly shocked, and his opinion seems to have been duplicated by all the Reynolds circle. By Bailey's behaviour, Keats tells George,

> "all his connections in town have been annulled — both male and female. I do not now remember clearly the facts. These however I know — He showed his correspondence with Marian to Gleig — returned all her Letters and asked for his own — he also wrote very abrupt Letters to Mrs. Reynolds . . . No doubt his conduct has been very bad. The great thing to be considered is — whether it is want of delicacy and principle or want of knowledge and polite experience. And again weakness — yes, that is it; and the want of a Wife — yes, that is it . . . Mariane's obstinacy is some excuse — but his so quickly taking to Miss Gleig can have no excuse — except that of a Ploughman who wants a wife. The thing which sways me more against him than anything else is Rice's conduct on the occasion; Rice would not make an immature resolve; he was ardent in his friendship for Bailey, he examined the whole for and against minutely; and he has abandoned Bailey entirely. All this I am not supposed by the Reynoldses to have any idea of."

These remarks about Bailey led Keats to a beautiful and wise observation, one of those observations which show us the very heart and core of his continual reflections:

> "A Man's life of any worth is a continual allegory, and very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life — a life like the scriptures, figurative — which such people can no more make out than they can the Hebrew Bible. Lord Byron cuts a figure but he is not figurative — Shakespeare led a life of Allegory: his works are the comments on it."

Bailey seems to have kept all Keats's letters, and that he should have received none on the occasion of Tom's death certainly looks as though Keats knew this long story some time earlier than he wrote it to George, in February. Whenever he found it out, it put a succinct end to any farther real friendship between them. Keats does not seem to have mentioned the subject to Bailey, merely to have dropped Bailey quietly and unobtrusively. One more letter to Bailey we have, written in the following August, but it reads more like an attempt to appear easy than anything else, as though Keats thought it wise to keep up the semblance of a relation, for, after all, the quarrel was none of his. But the life of their friendship was dead, and no other letters passed between them.

The long, wet drive to and from Stanstead brought back Keats's sore throat, and he was housed for practically the whole rest of his visit; but he liked the Snooks and seems to have enjoyed talking to them.

If his "fortnight" is to be taken as exact, Keats returned to Wentworth Place on February sixth. He came back in miserable health, and much tormented by a fresh evidence of Abbey's desire to separate him still farther from his sister. Abbey now expressed his unwillingness to allow the brother and sister to correspond. This hurt Keats very much, as did Abbey's manner on one or two occasions when he went to see him; finally Keats took the bull by the horns and wrote Abbey a letter which had some effect in inducing him to grant the brother and sister a little more freedom together.

Keats's state of mind on his return to Hampstead seems to have been a decidedly complicated one, and only a tithe of his perplexities appears in his letters. His scrupulous care to keep everything connected with Fanny Brawne and his real relation to her from his brother's knowledge, leaves his narration of events — psychological events, at any rate — singularly incomplete. To supplement it, we have

the evidence of the poems he wrote during the Spring, and a few annotations in a book he happened to be reading at the time. Buxton Forman imagines that Keats announced his engagement to his brother and sister-in-law in a letter which has been lost; I see no reason for any such supposition. On the contrary, I think everything we can judge by points to the fact of Keats having admitted an engagement only after seeing George on the latter's return to England in the following year, when it would be almost impossible to conceal it any longer. What George and Georgiana may have guessed from the letters of others of the circle is another thing. I feel very sure that Keats took as few people as possible into his confidence at any time, and then only when the circumstances had become too patent to be ignored.

Whatever Keats did, or did not, say to his friends and his brother and sister-in-law, it is obvious that Fanny Brawne, and the overwhelming love for her in which he found himself plunged, filled him with turmoil and all the alternations of extreme joy and fearful distrust which we should expect. With our intimate knowledge of his temperament, we need not be astonished to find him turning even his happiness into an exquisite self-torture. For his moments of sheer felicity — and we may be certain that he had such moments to excess — there were others in which his imagination conjured up a thousand puerile infidelities and laid them at Fanny Brawne's door to the consequent discomfort of both. Let us admit, once and for all, that Keats must have been a very uneasy lover. It would be small wonder if Fanny Brawne occasionally asked herself whether this exacting and excitable young man could make any woman really happy, yet that seems to have been a question which, in sober earnest, she never asked. She made her choice and abided by it, all honour to her for so doing.

As a matter of fact, the outlook from a commonsense

standpoint was not at all assuring. Keats had no idea that he was already a victim of consumption, but he did know that he was strangely liable to sore throats, and was often on the sick list for days at a time. On his return to Wentworth Place, he took himself firmly in hand and shut himself up in the house. "Since I came back," he wrote to his sister, "I have been taking care of myself — I have been obliged to do so, and am now in hopes that by this care I shall get rid of a sore throat which has haunted me at intervals nearly a twelvemonth." A long engagement is one thing; an engagement which can count on no change in circumstances such as will make marriage possible, is another. Mrs. Brawne had a little money, but scarcely enough for her to contemplate the financing of a second household; Keats had made large inroads into his principal and the chancery suit left his hopes for the future extremely problematical. He had no settled means of support, and was determined at all costs to write poetry come what would. There was enough in all this to cause anxiety.

At first, after he got home, the writing fit continued. In a journal letter to George, begun on February fourteenth,[1] he says: "We — Brown and I — sit opposite one another all day authorizing." He seems to have been engaged in tinkering on the *Eve of St. Agnes*, but he also began the *Eve of St. Mark*. Woodhouse, who states[2] that he copied the poem from Keats's manuscript, adds that it was written "13/17 Feb., 1819." St. Mark's Eve falls on April twenty-fourth, so that the day itself counted for nothing in Keats's choice of subject. Probably it grew out of the already partly fin-

[1] The letter is dated "Sunday Morn, Feby. 24th 1819," but this is clearly an error made either by Keats himself or some later copyist. The correct date is undoubtedly February 14th, since that was a Sunday. A continuation of the letter is dated "Friday Feby 18" which is probably right as to the day of the week, although the day of the month should have been given as the nineteenth. See Appendix D.

[2] Woodhouse Commonplace Book (*Poems II*). Crewe Collection.

ished *Eve of St. Agnes*. Notwithstanding that he had one superb poem nearly done, and another, which promised to be as good, fairly on the stocks, Keats found himself unable to go on. The excitements and anxieties which beset him proved too harassing to leave him in the proper frame of mind for writing poetry. He tells George:

> [1]"In my next packet, as this one is by the way, I shall send you my Pot of Basil, St. Agnes' eve, and if I should have finished it, a little thing called the eve of St. Mark. You see what fine Mother Radcliffe names I have — it is not my fault — I did not search for them. I have not gone on with Hyperion, for to tell the truth I have not been in great cue for writing lately — I must wait for the spring to rouse me up a little."

As the *Eve of St. Mark*, although begun in February, was so soon abandoned and not taken up again until September, I shall wait to consider it until the Winchester period.

What principally troubled Keats was undoubtedly his adjustment to Fanny Brawne. With Keats, love and jealousy were inseparable. We can guess at the state of things by a rather pathetic little remark in a letter to his sister Fanny. Speaking of the Abbey's garden at Walthamstow, he says:

> "I should like to take possession of those Grassplots for a Month or so; and send Mrs. A. to Town to count coffee berries instead of currant Bunches, for I want you to teach me a few common dancing steps — and I would buy a Watch box to practise them in by myself."

Keats, who did not dance, was at an obvious disadvantage at a dancing-party, and to be at a disadvantage where Fanny Brawne was concerned must have galled him terribly. There is no record of his having mastered his "dancing steps," but there is a record of the way conditions were worrying him, and this record is from a most unex-

[1] Corrected from original letter.

pected source — a copy of *Palmerin of England*.[1] We have Hunt's authority for the fact that Keats was reading *Palmerin* at this time. The book had been lent him by Taylor and he liked it so much that he never returned it, it was found among his books after he died and given back to its rightful owner by Brown. Now in this book there are a number of passages underscored by Keats, and some of these underscorings can hardly have been made for any purpose other than the personal application which he found in the passages so marked. These particular annotations are all in the third and fourth volumes of the work, the first of them can certainly not have been noticed for its excellence as poetry. It is:

> "Some men in love commend their happiness,
> their quiet, sweet, and delicate delight;
> And I can boast of fortune's forwardness,
> her extreme rigour, and severe despight.
> But for the sweetness other men have felt,
> I came too late, my part was elsewhere dealt."

The next passage scored is: "it is the nature of women to desire to see novelties, and go pilgrimages." Again, Keats marks a passage where a knight overhears another boasting that he is master of his affections, which words seemed to the listener "to come from one who was at liberty, and to whom love could do neither good nor evil. But he himself desired not to live in such liberty." The following is partly double scored; "I do not hold her to be of such poor understanding as that for a man *so free as you* she should be willing to reject a *will so devoted as mine*." That Keats found an exact analogy to his own case in these next lines, is evident: "And as men whose hearts have long been free, when they devote them at last are more devoted than such as have been used to such devotement, so it was with this knight." Here, also, it must have been himself of whom he

[1] Owned by Mr. Lucius Wilmerding of New York.

was thinking when he drew his pencil under the last half of this sentence: "He had no other food than his *own imaginations, which would sooner destroy than support him.*" Of vanity in women, he scores this: "so strong is this passion in them that nothing can equal it."

Have we not, in these marked passages of *Palmerin*, as clear an account of Keats's mental state during February and March as we need to understand why he could not write, why he saw so little of his friends, why so many old interests had lost their savour?

The evidence of the change in his daily habits may be seen by a few casual remarks in the beginning of his letter to George. For instance:

> "I see very little now, and very few persons, being almost tired of men and things. Brown and Dilke are very kind and considerate towards me. The Miss R's have been stopping next door lately, but are very dull. Miss Brawne and I have every now and then a chat and a tiff . . . The literary world I know nothing about . . . Yesterday I went to town for the first time for these three weeks. I met people from all parts and of all sorts . . . I see very little of Reynolds. Hunt, I hear is going on very badly — I mean in money matters. I shall not be surprised to hear of the worst. Haydon too, in consequence of his eyes, is out at elbows. I live as prudently as it is possible for me to do. I have not seen Haslam lately. I have not seen Richards for this half year, Rice for three months, or Charles Cowden Clarke for God knows when."

Keats gives a homely little thumbnail sketch of suburban gossip in the London stage. He tells the story half-humorously, half-ruefully, and since the anecdote serves to throw another sidelight on the main picture, I think it worth repeating as Keats told it:

> "Mr. Lewis went a few mornings ago to town with Mrs. Brawne. They talked about me, and I heard that Mr. L. said a thing that I am not at all contented with. Says he,

'O, he is quite the little poet.' Now this is abominable. You might as well say that Buonaparte is quite the little soldier. You see what it is to be under six foot and not a lord."

In spite of the general dislocation of his life at the moment, Keats was manfully trying to keep his head to the wind. His second instalment of the long letter to George contains the following:

"I have not said in any Letter a word about my own affairs — in a word I am in no despair about them — my poem has not at all succeeded; in the course of a year or so I think I shall try the public again — in a selfish point of view I should suffer my pride and my contempt of public opinion to hold me silent — but for yours and Fanny's sake I will pluck up a spirit and try again. I have no doubt of success in a course of years if I persevere — but it must be patience — for the Reviews have enervated and made indolent men's minds — few think for themselves. These Reviews too are getting more and more powerful, especially the Quarterly — they are like a superstition which the more it prostrates the Crowd and the longer it continues the more powerful it becomes just in proportion to their increasing weakness. I was in hopes that when people saw, as they must do now, all the trickery and iniquity of these Plagues they would scout them, but no, they are like the spectators at the Westminister cock-pit — they like the battle — and do not care who wins or loses."

Keats's attitude was both plucky and shrewd, and he was fortunate in having publishers who backed him up at every point. Taylor & Hessey's loyalty, kept at the boiling point by Woodhouse's enthusiasm, is one of the bright spots in Keats's life. A long undated letter from Woodhouse, apparently to his cousin, Miss Frogley, and evidently written shortly after the episode of Miss Porter and *Endymion*, shows Woodhouse's loyalty and wisdom in such a clear light, reveals indeed so much of the fine feeling and

understanding which certain of Keats's admirers had for his work that, notwithstanding its length, I shall give some parts of it here.

[1]"My dear Mary.

I returned from Hounslow late last night . . . I brought Endymion back, thinking you might like to have it in Town whilst with your friends.

You were so flattering as to say the other day, you wished I had been in a company where you were, to defend Keats. — In all places, and at all times, and before all persons, I would express and so far as I am able, support, my high opinion of his poetical merits — such a genius, I verily believe, has not appeared since Shakespeare and Milton: and I may assert without fear of contradiction from any one competent to Judge, that if his Endymion be compared with Shakespeare's earliest work (his Venus and Adonis) written about the same age, Keats's poem will be found to contain more beauties, more poetry (and that of a higher order) less conceit and bad taste and in a word much more promise of excellence than are to be found in Shakespeare's work. This is a deliberate opinion, nor is it merely my own . . .

But in our common conversation upon his merits, we should always bear in mind that his fame may be more hurt by indiscriminate praise than by wholesale censure. I would at once admit that he has great faults — enough indeed to sink another writer. But they are more than counterbalanced by his beauties: and this is the proper mode of appreciating an original genius. His faults will wear away — his fire will be chastened — and then eyes will do homage to his brilliancy. But genius is wayward, trembling, easily daunted. And shall we not excuse the errors, the luxuriancy of youth? Are we to expect that poets are to be given to the world, as our first parents were, in a state of maturity? Are they to have no season of childhood? are they to have no room to try their wings be-

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Library. This original draft is badly torn. The version in the text has been corrected from a copy of the original letter published by Sir Sidney Colvin in the *Times Literary Supplement*, April 16, 1914.

fore the steadiness and strength of their flight are to be finally judged of? . . . Had I any literary reputation I would stake it on the result. You know the side I should espouse. As it is, — I can only prophesy. And now, while Keats is unknown, unheeded, despised of one of our arch-critics, neglected by the rest — in the teeth of the world, and in the face of 'these curious days,' I express my conviction, that Keats, during his life (if it please God to spare him to the usual age of man, and the critics not to drive him from the free air of the Poetic heaven before his Wings are fully fledged) will rank on a level with the best of the last or of the present generation: and after his death will take his place at their head. But, while I think thus, I would make persons respect my judgement by the discrimination of my praise, and by the freedom of my censure where his writings are open to it. These are the Elements of true criticism. It is easy, like Momus, to find fault with the clattering of the slipper worn by the Goddess of beauty; but 'the serious Gods' found better employment in admiration of her unapproachable loveliness. A Poet ought to write for Posterity. But a critic should do so, too. Those of our times write for the day, or rather the hour. Their thoughts and Judgements are fashionable garbs, such as they imagine a skew-wise world would like to array itself in at second hand . . . Adieu, my dear Mary . . .

I am as ever yours,

Richard Woodhouse."

That letter makes one forgive Woodhouse's occasional ineptitudes. His heart was always in the right place, and if he ever guessed that his meticulous inquiries into the meaning and method of Keats's work sometimes brought on himself a little bored spoofing, he had the wit and the kindness to ignore the fact. A few months later, we find Keats asking Dilke if he knows Woodhouse, and explaining: "He is a Friend of Taylor's at whom Brown has taken one of his funny odd dislikes. I'm sure he's wrong, because Woodhouse likes my Poetry — conclusive." We have already seen Woodhouse scheming to enlarge Keats's hori-

zon, to lift him out of his rut. Now suddenly either he or Taylor conceived the idea that it would do Keats good to stay with Taylor for a few days, and take in a theatre or two. Taylor was now living at 93 New Bond Street, and Keats was persuaded to pass "two or three days" with him during the last week of February, getting back to Hampstead on Friday, February twenty-sixth.

Sir Sidney Colvin believes that the *Bright Star* sonnet was written on this visit. I freely admit that it may have been, but I am inclined, for reasons which I shall give presently, to attribute it to mid-April. Sir Sidney has recently discovered a transcript of the sonnet made by Brown and dated "1819." There was a snow flurry on the afternoon of Wednesday, February twenty-fourth, and another on the following morning, and for this reason — since Keats speaks of

> ". . . the new soft fallen mask
> Of snow"

in the poem — Sir Sidney attributes it to this time. It is dangerous reasoning to date a poem by its images. A poet may be writing under the circumstances which he depicts in his poem, or, quite as possibly, the exact opposite may be true. Many things have to be taken into consideration when a question of date is involved. Being fairly certain that mid-April is the more likely moment for the poem to have been written, I shall not discuss it until we arrive at Keats's doings for April. Then my readers can weigh my arguments against Sir Sidney's and draw their own conclusions.

At the beginning of March, we find Keats writing to Haydon:

> "You must be wondering where I am and what I am about! I am mostly at Hampstead and about nothing; being in a sort of qui bono temper, not exactly on the road to an epic poem. Nor must you think I have forgotten you.

No, I have about every three days been to Abbey's and to the Law[y]ers."

We know for what purpose these visits were made, as Haydon's business had not yet been settled. Keats was in a distinctly disgusted mood when he wrote this letter, and he takes no pains to hide his spleen. "What a set of little people we live amongst!" he exclaims, and goes on:

> "Conversation is not a thirst after knowledge, but an endeavour at effect.
>
> In this respect two most opposite men, Wordsworth and Hunt, are the same. A friend of mine observed the other day that if Lord Bacon were to make any remark in a party of the present day, the conversation would stop on the sudden. I am convinced of this, and from this I have come to this resolution — never to write for the sake of writing or making a poem, but from running over with any little knowledge or experience which many years of reflection may perhaps give me; otherwise I will be dumb . . .
>
> With respect to my livelihood, I will not write for it, — for I will not run with that most vulgar of all crowds, the literary. Such things I ratify by looking upon myself, and trying myself by lifting mental weights, as it were. I am three and twenty, with little knowledge and middling intellect. It is true that in the height of enthusiasm I have been cheated into some fine passages; but that is not the thing."

It is not the thing, most assuredly; and Keats owes it to his excellent critical faculty to have discovered this important artistic truth so early. But if he were not going to write for his living, what was he going to do for it, since his interviews with Abbey had shown him pretty clearly that what money he had left would keep him no long time unless he found some way of augmenting it? Looking his prospects fairly in the face, he even considered the advisability of going to Edinburgh and studying for a physician's certificate, but, he tells George, "I am afraid I should not

take kindly to it; I am sure I could not take fees — and yet I should like to do so; it's not worse than writing poems, and hanging them up to be fly-blown on the Review shambles."

It may seem odd that Keats, who had an apothecary's diploma, never appears to have considered practising his profession. But there were several reasons which may well have made this the last thing that he wanted to do. It was not so long since Abbey had wished him to buy a practice as surgeon and apothecary in one of the London suburbs; but two years is two years, and his small capital could no longer provide him with means for this. If he started in practice, it must be as some one's assistant, and he knew himself well enough to realize that that would never work. Also, the people with whom he was now living were socially rather above an apothecary's standard. Keats hated the idea of a shop, and physicians did not have shops. Where the money for his tuition in Edinburgh was to come from does not seem to have entered into his calculations. The fact is, he did not want to be a physician, he did not want to do anything but write poetry, and in the end he let the whole thing slide, optimistically persuading himself that things could not be as bad as Abbey said. We must not blame him too much for this inertia, nor shall we, if we keep firmly in mind two things: one, his health; the other, that he had an irresistible bent in one direction, a bent so strong that nothing on earth could turn him from it. If ever a man was born to write poetry, Keats was that man. A little poet, like Reynolds, could abandon literature for the law when it became a question of marrying or not; a great poet, like Keats, must, by the very necessity of his being, function as nature intended, even his love, profound and permeating though it were, could not stand against the natural impulse of his whole nature. Fanny Brawne seems to have understood this, and there is no evidence that she ever urged him to take up a practical profession,

as Miss Drew urged Reynolds. This attitude of Fanny Brawne's is one of the noblest things we know about her.

That Keats was utterly worn out with his sensations at this time, it takes no great amount of perspicacity to see. We must not forget that the agony of the Autumn was bound to take its toll sooner or later. No man could run the gamut of so many emotions as Keats had endured during the last six months without having it tell on his energies. This has been so little understood that it has been the habit of critics and biographers to attribute his inability to write from mid-February to mid-March to the baleful influence of Fanny Brawne, instead of understanding at once that it was simply imperative for him to lie fallow and store up what health and vitality he had until his reservoir of creative force was once more full enough to draw upon.

A little extra strain was sufficient to throw him into a state of numbness, a sort of weary trance in which, being himself, his imagination visited him with dreams, but dreams cool, temperate, pricking him to no answering emotion. This is the meaning of a passage in the letter to George which has been almost universally misconstrued. It was written on Friday, the nineteenth of March:

> "This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless — I long after a stanza or two of Thompson's Castle of Indolence — my passions are all asleep, from my having slumbered till nearly eleven, and weakened the animal fibre all over me, to a delightful sensation, about three degrees on this side of faintness. If I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lilies I should call it languor, but as I am I must call it laziness. In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable power. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me; they seem rather like figures on a Greek vase — a Man and two

women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement."

At the words "as I am," Keats put an asterisk, and at the bottom of the page wrote "Especially as I have a black eye." And thereby hangs a tale.

It has hitherto been supposed that this black eye refers to the fight with the butcher who was tormenting the kitten.[1] But a perfectly fresh light has been thrown upon the matter by the discovery of what seems to have been intended as a part of this letter. It has come into my possession too late to permit of its being incorporated in the text, but will be found elsewhere.[2] Through it, we learn that the immediate cause of the black eye was a cricket ball. Keats seems to have been trying to dispel his fatigue by some strenuous and unwonted exercise, and the blow from the ball was a serious matter to his overtaxed strength. Keats was neither lazy nor sybaritic in sleeping until eleven and waking in the listless mood he describes. He was utterly played out. We must remember that he was not only entirely out of training, he was really a sick man. Gloriously and stubbornly as his magnificent constitution refused to be downed by the tuberculosis which was slowly, but steadily, tightening its hold, nevertheless he was in no condition to stand a shock of any kind. Only a short month before, he had shrunk from walking up the hill to call on Mr. Lewis. It was extremely foolish to attempt even the mildest and most short-handed cricket, and the effort told. Instead of reading into his description of this morning's relaxation a sign of sensuous indulgence, we should realize that in it we have a clear evidence of an indomitable will triumphing over a serious state of debility and disease. If only Keats's friends had understood, if only the sheer grit with which he kept himself going could have met with a little sensible medical help, if only — for this is what it amounts to — Keats had

[1] See Vol. I, p. 257. [2] See Appendix D.

lived a century later than he did. But these are dreams. Keats lived, and alas! died, a victim of his age, and in some sense, too, a victim of his own courage and innate vitality.

Keats's vitality, that spark in him which made him the vivid creature he was, deceived his friends as to his actual situation until his first hæmorrhage forced it unescapably upon them. Even after that, the doctors refused to take alarm as they should have done. At this period, a few days after the episode of the cricket ball, Clarke went out to Wentworth Place to see him, on which occasion Keats read to him the *Eve of St. Agnes*. Clarke found him "in fine health and spirits," [1] which only proves how little a casual visitor could tell his real condition when, for any reason, his mind was actively engaged and happy. Immediately after this, Clarke left London to go and live with his father, now settled at Ramsgate, and the two friends never met again.

I do not wish to give the impression that Keats's illness was a steady progression which his friends could see advancing from day to day. Taken by terms of months, undoubtedly an observant onlooker could have noticed a steady decline; but there were periods of apparent resilience when for weeks at a time Keats gave an impression of recovered health, and his moods of mental depression were made responsible, in his friends' ignorant opinion, for much more of his evident low spirits than they could properly bear. Difficult as his life was during the remainder of the year, it is time that students realized how great a part of his despondence was due solely to disease. The wonder is that both physically and mentally he held his own so long.

Meanwhile we see him, not writing indeed as yet, but forcing himself back into his usual interests. He quotes at great length Hazlitt's *Letter to William Gifford* for George's benefit. He sends a volume of Goldsmith to Fanny, and

[1] See Appendix D.

writes to her about Tassie's gems.[1] On March thirteenth, he tells her, charmingly:

> "I must confess even now a partiality for a handsome Globe of gold-fish — then I would have it hold 10 pails of water and be fed continually fresh through a cool pipe with another pipe to let through the floor — well ventilated they would preserve all their beautiful silver and Crimson. Then I would put it before a handsome painted window and shade it all round with myrtles and Japonicas. I should like the window to open onto the Lake of Geneva — and there I'd sit and read all day like the picture of somebody reading. The weather now and then begins to feel like spring; and therefore I have begun my walks on the heath again."

As these walks seem to have been principally taken with Fanny Brawne, the mere mention of them is significant.

Toward the end of March (Buxton Forman thinks that Keats's letter, which is simply dated, "Monday — af$^{t}$," was written on the twenty-ninth) Severn proposed that he put into the Royal Academy exhibition, along with his picture of *Hermia and Helena*, a miniature which he had painted of Keats. We have no exact knowledge of when this miniature was done, since Sharp,[2] in attributing it to the Winter of 1819, is clearly in error, as he says that the miniature was much liked by Keats's brothers, and by 1819 one of his brothers was dead, and the other in America. The most likely time for it to have been painted was, I think, the Winter of 1818, although it may have been done even earlier. Severn painted all three of the Keats brothers, and it is not improbable that he did them all about the same time, during 1817 and the early part of 1818.

Keats's reply to Severn's suggestion shows admirable good sense and modesty. In the first instance, he warns Severn that a miniature is lost in a great exhibition; in the

[1] See Vol. I, p. 490.

[2] *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

second, he tells Severn plainly that to exhibit it may hurt them both, considering their ages and lack of fame, and that people would be apt to "laugh at the puff of the one and the vanity of the other." However, in the end he left Severn a free hand, and Severn, nothing daunted, added the miniature to his large picture as his contribution for the year. The two paintings were hung at the Royal Academy exhibition for 1819; the *Hermia and Helena* appearing in the catalogue as Number 267, and the miniature as Number 940.

In these long journal letters to George, Keats frequently breaks off and begins again without making any change of date. Was it on the weary Friday that he continued his letter with certain very interesting reflections, or does this contribution mean a lapse of twenty-four hours or more? Arguments in favour of either supposition could easily be found, but because of the last sentence of this section of the letter, I am inclined to believe that the latter half of it was written a day later than the former. There is a slight change of mood at this point, the not unpleasant languor has given place to a more energetic feeling; once more he has begun to think and reason. His new, although related, train of thought, is induced by the fact that he has just heard from Haslam that his father is dying. Keats says:

> "This is the world — thus we cannot expect to give away many hours to pleasure. Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting. While we are laughing, the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events — while we are laughing it sprouts, it grows, and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck. Even so we have leisure to reason on the misfortunes of our friends; our own touch us too nearly for words. Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind: very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others, — in the greater part of the Benefactors of Humanity some meretricious motive

has sullied their greatness — some melodramatic scenery has fascinated them. From the manner in which I feel Haslam's misfortune I perceive how far I am from any humble standard of disinterestedness."

Keats was a man who dared look into himself, and few men have sought to do this so honestly. The realization of the imperfection of his sympathy leads him on to the thought of the universe of creatures all pursuing their own ends, and man among them equally intent upon his. From a rather confused train of reasoning, which seems intended to prove a thesis at which he never quite arrives, he suddenly breaks off to state the exact opposite of his original premise, but this statement is, in itself, a most important thing, particularly when we remember his constantly growing repugnance to the formulæ of religious teaching. Here is what he says:

"I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested: I can remember but two — Socrates and Jesus — Their histories evince it. What I heard a little time ago, Taylor observe with respect to Socrates, may be said of Jesus — That he was so great a man that though he transmitted no writing of his own to posterity, we have his Mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by Men interested in the pious frauds of Religion. Yet through all this I see his splendour."

Nothing could explain Keats's attitude toward the fundamental nobility of spiritual apprehensions better than that passage; nor his full realization of his own inability to plumb his glimmering perceptions to an ultimate end than this one which immediately follows:

"Even here, though I myself am pursuing the same instinctive course as the veriest human animal you can think of, I am, however young, writing at random, strain-

ing at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness, without knowing the bearing of any one assertion, of any one opinion."

There is more here that I should like to quote, but space forbids. The passage ends with a bit of self-revelation and a profound truth:

> "Do you not think that I strive — to know myself? Give me this credit . . . Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced — even a Proverb is no proverb to you till your Life has illustrated it."

This does not seem to be the mood of Friday morning. No, I take it to be the mood of Saturday. But here, suddenly, Keats copies a poem. Only the week before, he had remarked to George:

> "I know not why Poetry and I have been so distant lately — I must make some advances soon or she will cut me entirely."

Now a poem has come, but under what circumstances? I think the slow recovery from the languid mood was responsible. For this sonnet distinctly circles round the vision of his waking dream, but with an ardour which the dream itself lacked. As his languor lessened, his pain returned, bringing with it a regret which gave to the perpetual numbness of death a strange desirability. Yet, lest George should read a greater distress into the poem than he purposes to convey, he prefaces it with an explanation. For George, knowing him to be without his erstwhile confidants, Tom and himself, will assuredly picture him as stifling his feelings within himself. He essays to reassure him, and the reassurance itself harks back to his previous meditations, which in turn seem to have sprung from the sonnet:

> "I am ever afraid that your anxiety for me will lead you

to fear for the violence of my temperament continually smothered down: for that reason I did not intend to have sent you the following sonnet — but look over the two last pages and ask yourselves whether I have not that in me which will bear the buffets of the world. It will be the best comment on my sonnet; it will show that it was written with no Agony but that of ignorance; with no thirst of anything but Knowledge when pushed to the point though the first steps to it were through my human passions — they went away and I wrote with my Mind — and perhaps I must confess a little bit of my heart."

Since this sonnet is not particularly well known, and is so pertinent to his mental state — his effort to fit the experience of love into some sort of pattern with his continual blind belief in a beauty and truth to which everything in his nature clung, together with the weariness which this constant effort caused him — I will quote it here.

"Why did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell:
No God, no Demon of severe response
Deigns to reply from heaven or from Hell. —
Then to my human heart I turn at once —
Heart! thou and I are here sad and alone;
Say, wherefore did I laugh? O mortal pain!
O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain!
Why did I laugh? I know this being's lease
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads:
Yet would I on this very midnight cease
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds.
Verse, Fame and Beauty are intense indeed
But Death intenser — Death is Life's high meed." [1]

Having copied the poem, he continues:

[1] There are two slight differences in this letter version of the sonnet to that given by Lord Houghton in his 1848 edition. I have kept to the letter version in one instance, but adopted Lord Houghton's version in the other. Again, Lord Houghton's capitalization and punctuation differ from the letter holograph, and again I have, with one exception, followed Keats.

"I went to bed and enjoyed uninterrupted sleep. Sane I went to bed and sane I arose."

I think we may believe every word that he says in this connection, and exactly as he says it. Although his mind had partially recovered from the inertia of the morning, he had still too little energy to suffer as was his wont. He could recollect the agony of his perpetual questioning, but was too tired to be wrung afresh. A subtle distinction of sensations, yet one of absolute fact; the respite of fatigue, to which he gladly surrendered and so fell asleep.

From this point, there occurs the gap of a month in his correspondence, broken only by the letter about the miniature to Severn. I will fill it by putting, quite out of order, a little sketch, which can by no means be omitted, but which I have found it impossible to give in its proper place. It belongs to the second week of March. Keats has been copying a long passage from Hazlitt's *Letter to William Gifford*. He breaks off to give this intimate picture of himself, an enchanting little vignette which must have warmed George's and Georgiana's hearts as it warms ours. It is this sort of thing which makes Keats one of the best letter writers that ever lived.

"... there is another extract or two — one especially which I will copy tomorrow — for the candles are burnt down and I am using the wax taper — which has a long snuff on it — the fire is at its last click — I am sitting with my back to it with one foot rather askew upon the rug and the other with the heel a little elevated from the carpet — I am writing this on the Maid's tragedy which I have read since tea with Great pleasure. Besides this volume of Beaumont and Fletcher — there are on the table two volumes of Chaucer and a new work of Tom Moore's called 'Tom Cribb's Memorial to Congress' — nothing in it. These are trifles but I require nothing so much of you but that you will give me a like description of yourselves, however it may be when you are writing to me. Could I

> see the same thing done of any great Man long since dead it would be a great delight: As to know in what position Shakespeare sat when he began 'To be or not to be' — such things become interesting from distance of time or place. I hope you are both now in that sweet sleep which no two beings deserve more than you do — I must fancy you so — and please myself in the fancy of speaking a prayer and a blessing over you and your lives — God bless you — I whisper good night in your ears and you will dream of me."

During the month in which Keats wrote so few letters, occurred an alteration in the domestic life of the double house, Wentworth Place. The Dilkes had one boy, who was the apple of his father's eye; indeed, so wrapped up in him was he, that his preoccupation rather bored his friends. Charley Dilke's education was a matter of the deepest concern to his doting father, and now that Charley had reached the age when a dame school would no longer serve, Dilke was busy canvassing all the pros and cons of various institutions. Finally Westminster School was chosen, and as Charley was to be a day boy, the Dilkes determined to let their half of Wentworth Place and move to Westminster. The flitting took place on April third. Although the departure of the Dilkes was in many ways a regret to Keats, it had its agreeable side, for the tenants who took their house were none other than the Brawne family. The increased opportunities for meeting, when members of the two families could not step into the garden without the chance of encountering one another, and Keats, looking out of his front parlour window, might at any moment see Fanny Brawne going out or coming in, on her way to town, or to walk on the Heath, must have added a still farther poignance to his feelings. More satisfaction, but also more fret, must have been the consequence. On the whole, however, I believe that the satisfaction won over the fret, for Keats evidently gained in tone and temper during the

Spring, a sure evidence being that he began writing again, more and more, and better and better, until he was fairly embarked in that rush of creation which produced *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and the great *Odes*. How Sir Sidney Colvin and others can declare that Keats could not write when he was near Fanny Brawne, with the magnificent work of this Spring — when he was living, if not in the same house, at least under the same roof, with her — staring them in the face, only shows to what lengths of false reasoning prejudice may lead. The season had something to do with this spate of creation undoubtedly, but the excitement of his growing intimacy with Fanny Brawne had more. He wrote about her and he wrote away from her (in subject, I mean), but the point is that he wrote, and this in spite of all those external teasing facts which improved no whit as time went on.

His delight in the warm winds, bright sun, and peeping flowers of early Spring, is all in this little remark to Fanny Keats in a letter which Buxton Forman dates (and I think quite rightly) from an incomplete postmark as being written on Tuesday, April thirteenth:

> "I hope you have good store of double violets — I think they are the Princesses of flowers, and in a shower of rain, almost as fine as barley sugar drops are to a schoolboy's tongue."

Yet even on this very day, the teasing facts were at him again. Haydon sent him a querulous note, upbraiding him for not having lent him the money he had promised. It was a nasty thing to do, for Haydon knew quite well how hard Keats had tried to carry out his promise and the reasons why he had been unable to do so. For what appears to be the first time, Haydon's egotistical indifference to any one's comfort when his own was involved seriously hurt Keats. He answers Haydon honestly and fairly, but he tells him the flat truth, that he

has tried and failed; and he adds, with no desire to mince matters:

> "I have also ever told you the exact particulars as well as and as literally as any hopes or fear could translate them."

In the end, he breaks out:

> "It has not been my fault. I am doubly hurt at the slightly reproachful tone of your note . . . You seem'd so sure of some important help when I last saw you — now you have maimed me again; I was whole, I had began reading again — when your note came I was engaged in a Book. I dread as much as a Plague the idle fever of two months more without any fruit."

Since we know that *Why did I laugh to-night?* was written in the middle of March, it was not strictly true that the last two months had been absolutely barren. And in view of the number of poems copied at the end of the February-May journal letter to America, one cannot help wondering whether they were all written after the middle of April, or whether some can have been composed earlier, but not have been of importance enough in Keats's eyes to be reckoned "fruit." This is a point which I shall come back to in a moment; after all, there is only one poem whose position in the letter I believe to be really suspect, and Keats specifically told his sister on this same thirteenth of April: "I have written nothing and almost read nothing — but I must turn over a new leaf." The new leaf was turned over almost immediately, as we shall see.

The letter to George was resumed on Thursday, the fifteenth of April, a date which is very important to us; at least, if a theory of mine which I have several times referred to in regard to the *Bright Star* sonnet is of any value. Keats tells George that he has "been to Mrs. Bentley's this morning, and put all the letters to and from you and poor Tom

and me." This is an odd sentence, and clearly was intended to have an ending which Keats forgot to set down. Undoubtedly he meant to say that he had put the letters together, or something of the sort. What is significant to us is that he had been reading old letters. The principal impression left on his mind by this raking up of the past, if we can judge by what he says, was the unpleasant hoax played by Wells on poor little Tom; but something else came out of it, and this something was a verbal recollection of a sentence in his first letter from Scotland to Tom which stuck in his head and became incorporated in a sonnet that he wrote very soon after. If my readers will take the trouble to turn back a couple of chapters to the very interesting commentary by Professor Rusk on this letter, they will see how closely related the sentence in question is to the *Bright Star* sonnet. I have already shown why I do not believe that the sonnet, or any idea of it, can have been in Keats's mind at the time he wrote this letter,[1] but the circumstances when he came to re-read it were entirely different. The point of view of the sonnet is one only too usual with him at this time — doubt, doubt, always doubt of Fanny Brawne's constancy, he himself believing one day, ceasing to believe the next. Gazing at the star, he longs to be as steadfast and unchangeable, not solitary, as it is, but with his love, in the certainty of perfect fulfilment, and so soothed and at rest continue till death ends all. The sentence in the letter[2] which became, with only a slight alteration of purpose, incorporated in the poem is:

> "refine one's sensual vision into a sort of north star which can never cease to be open lidded and stedfast over the wonders of the great Power."

Let us suppose that Keats, meditating on his sonnet, finds running in his head this sentence from his recently re-

[1] See Vol. II, p. 25. [2] See Vol. II, p. 22.

read letter; it exactly fits his purpose and he uses it as follows:

> "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art —
> Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
> And watching, with eternal lids apart,
> Like nature's devout, sleepless Eremite."

So far he has kept very closely to his original sentence, but when he comes to "the wonders of the great Power," instead of merely suggesting them, as in the letter, he illustrates and describes, as befits a poetical pattern. These wonders must, however, in a small compass seem to convey everything, so he paraphrases them, in time-honoured fashion, by the sea and the mountains. That we should expect; but the special recollection to him here is Scotland, hence he adds the "moors." The snow, I feel quite certain, owes its existence to nothing at all but the necessity of finding a rhyme for "task"; the word "mask" being perfectly appropriate to the obliterating effect of snow. It may be objected that "moors" is also merely a rhyme word, but this I doubt, principally because it does not properly rhyme at all. Also "shores" is not nearly so difficult a word to find a rhyme to as is "task." Then again, the "mountains and the moors" line could have been altered in a number of ways without injuring the poem, while the idea in

> "The morning waters at their priestlike task"

was too good to lose.[1]

Sir Sidney Colvin, in laying so great a stress on the verisimilitude of the snow flurries[2] in February, forgets that this same snow would hide the stars. To be sure, if we allow any weight to the realism of weather conditions, from February twenty-fourth to February twenty-sixth, when Keats was at Taylor's, there was only the thinnest

[1] For Keats's final revisions on this sonnet, see Vol. II, p. 480.
[2] See Vol. II, p. 188.

and earliest-setting of new moons, which, were it not for the obscuring snow, would help his reasoning; but my theory is equally happy in this respect, for, from April fifteenth until the twenty-fourth, the moon was a waning one, and this left the sky, at any hour when Keats would be likely to see it, under the full influence of the stars.

I do not say that all this absolutely proves that the *Bright Star* sonnet was written in mid-April, I simply say that the evidence is very strong in favour of it. Another argument is the quality of the sonnet itself, which seems to belong to the flowering period just then beginning, and to be closely related in tenor to a love poem which immediately followed it, *As Hermes once took to his feathers light*, whereas, if it were written at the end of February, it was a lone example, and its existence does not seem to tally with Keats's distinct statement to George on the thirteenth of March: "I know not why Poetry and I have been so distant lately." Keats would scarcely have made such a remark if he had done so good a thing as the *Bright Star* sonnet within a couple of weeks. A certain stiffness in handling, the result of a long rest from writing, is observable in *Why did I laugh to-night?*, and this stiffness seems to give that poem the position of pioneer after his pause, a pioneer which for some time stood alone. By the time the *Bright Star* was written, the tension had snapped, his creative force was ready to flow, and did flow abundantly from then on for a long time. It is true that Keats did not copy this sonnet in the letter to George, but that is equally true if it were written in February. The answer is not far to seek; the sonnet would have told George too much, the reason for it could not have been obscured under a subsidiary meaning as in the cases of *Why did I laugh to-night?* and *As Hermes once took to his feathers light.*

The exact day on which the *Bright Star* sonnet was written, I cannot pretend to determine. But there is a pregnant remark in his letter of April fifteenth. Shortly

after telling George of his going to Mrs. Bentley's, he says: "I am still at a stand in versifying — I cannot do it yet with any pleasure." This looks as though he had been making abortive attempts at poetry; and what more natural, in that case, than for a new attempt to turn suddenly and unexpectedly into a success. The probability of this speculation is enhanced by his seeking a start from the sentence in his old letter. I am much inclined, because of this, to hazard a conjecture that the sonnet was written on either April fifteenth, sixteenth, or seventeenth.

I have spoken of Wells's hoax played on Tom, and this seems the moment to explain it. Wells wrote a series of letters to Tom purporting to be from a woman who signed herself "Amena." This person gave out that she had fallen in love with Tom, and the poor little fellow appears to have been completely taken in. I suppose the deception must have been discovered before Tom died or Keats would not have spoken of it as a "diabolical scheme" and "a cruel deception on a sanguine Temperament," and declared that he hated it "to a sickness." Keats was cut to the quick, naturally, and announced his intention of injuring Wells in every way he could. That he ever did injure him, or make any attempt in that direction, it is folly to think; he spoke of the matter to George in hot blood, with his heart full of pain and anger. But he broke with Wells at once, and does not seem to have had anything more to do with him. Wells must have realized the justice of his action, for years after, in 1845, he wrote that when Keats "passed into the Land of Spirits" he took "one half of my heart with him."[1]

A little before the period which we have now reached, a new poem by Wordsworth was announced for publication. None of Keats's set had any sympathy with Wordsworth's predilection for poems of the *Betty Foy*, *Harry Gill* type. The name of this forthcoming work, *Peter Bell*, seemed to

[1] From an article by Buxton Forman in the *Bibliophile Year Book*, 1913.

herald another of the *genre*, and the opportunity to offer a slight chastisement to the poet for so degrading his genius — as these young men considered it — was too good to be missed. Reynolds had a pretty wit of the kind which lends itself to parody, and he promptly dashed off an amusing skit in Wordsworth's most irritatingly "simple" vein. With what seems to us a very questionable license, Reynolds entitled his lampoon *Peter Bell. A Lyrical Ballad.* To print a parody of a poem before it had appeared, from guesswork, and to call that parody by the very name of the forthcoming original, is certainly a breach of good taste if not worse. But this does not seem to have troubled either the author, or Taylor and Hessey, the publishers. Out the poem came, to the huge delight of all the Reynolds circle, except perhaps Keats, who wrote a review of it for Hunt to print in the *Examiner*, because Reynolds had asked him to get Hunt to notice it and this seemed the best way to do so. Keats says very little to George about Reynolds's *jeu d'esprit*, although he does remark by the way that "It would be just as well to trounce Lord Byron in the same manner." Keats's review, which came out in the *Examiner* for Sunday, April twenty-fifth, is short, and, as he says himself, "a little politic," for he is careful to assure the public that the author (the parody was anonymous) "had felt the finer parts of Mr. WORDSWORTH'S poetry," and here follows so good a criticism, so admirably expressed, that it alone makes the review worth while. Speaking of this aspect of the parodist, Keats says:

> "The more he may love the sad embroidery of the *Excursion*, the more will he hate the coarse samplers of Betty Foy and Alice Fell."[1]

The rest of the review is taken up with praising Reynolds's deftness, and the whole ends with this tactful sentence:

> "If we are one part amused with this, we are three parts

[1] See Vol. I, p. 319.

> sorry that any one who has any appearance of appreciating WORDSWORTH, should show so much temper at this really provoking name of *Peter Bell*."

Keats describes his effort to George by saying: "I keep clear of all parties — I say something for and against both parties," and concludes with the consoling opinion, "I and my conscience are in luck to day — which is an excellent thing." The little paper was a very neat feat of critical trapeze work, a skilful balancing between opposite impressions, which Hunt eked out by long quotations from the parody and its Preface without farther comment. It needed none.

I have already spoken of the difficulty of dating these journal letters. It seems to have been on this same fifteenth of April that Keats, who was clearly getting in cue for writing again, suddenly broke into verse. Apropos of nothing, he begins: "Shall I treat you to a little extempore," and promptly does so. This extempore is sheer nonsense, dashed down at the instance of a sudden fit of rhyming. It is not even a joke, it is just rhyming and no more, although the fairy story which he spins out of it is amusing enough to make us wonder how the tale would end. For it does not end, as it does not begin. Just for fun, Keats divides it in the middle by writing "End of Canto XII," and beginning again with "Canto the XIII." Twenty-two lines farther on, he stops as abruptly as he had started, for, says he:

> "Brown is gone to bed — and I am tired of rhyming — there is a north wind blowing playing young gooseberry with the trees — I don't care so it helps even with a side wind a Letter to me."

One of Keats's anxieties was that no letter had come from the travellers since they started on the last lap of their journey to Birkbeck's settlement. This silence lay all Winter as a growing misery in the back of his mind. Poor fellow, how many worries were heaped on him at once, and how

bravely he sought to face them! The rhyming fit was a good sign, he was getting hold of himself.

Although Keats was tired of rhyming, he was not yet tired of writing, and before going to bed he recounted a little adventure which had happened to him the Sunday before, April eleventh. It had no consequences, which is perhaps the most important thing about it. I give it exactly as Keats jotted it down:

> "Last Sunday I took a walk towards Highgate and in the lane[1] that winds by the side of Lord Mansfield's park I met Mr. Green[2] our demonstrator at Guy's in conversation with Coleridge — I joined them, after enquiring by a look whether it would be agreeable — I walked with him at his alderman-after-dinner pace for near two miles I suppose. In those two Miles he broached a thousand things — let me see if I can give you a list — Nightingales, Poetry — on Poetical Sensation — Metaphysics — Different genera and species of Dreams — Nightmare — a dream accompanied with a sense of touch — single and double touch — a dream related — First and second consciousness — the difference explained between will and Volition — so many metaphysicians from a want of smoking the second consciousness — Monsters — the Kraken — Mermaids — Southey believes in them — Southey's belief too much diluted — a Ghost story — Good morning — I heard his voice as he came towards me — I heard it as he moved away — I heard it all the interval — if it may be called so. He was civil enough to ask me to call on him at Highgate."

There is no malice in this account, but Keats was evidently not in key to fall a victim to the spell of Coleridge's eloquence. He listened to the continuous rumble of words without enthusiasm, at least so his lack of comment leads us to suppose. All his contemporaries assure us that

[1] Millfield Lane, where Keats gave his *Poems* to Hunt in 1817.

[2] Joseph Henry Green, afterwards F.R.S. and Professor of Anatomy to the Royal Academy, had been Junior Demonstrator at St. Thomas's Hospital in 1816. He was a disciple of Coleridge's and an interpreter of his philosophy.

Coleridge was an inspired monologist; but youth, even highly intelligent youth, endures monologue but ill. Keats endured it just two miles, and seems to have felt no hunger for more, since he did not avail himself of Coleridge's invitation to call on him at Highgate. Keats was not of the sort which sits at the feet of older men. His youthful idealization of Hunt had taught him a lesson, and his admiration of Wordsworth had been greatly tempered by personal contact. He could admire profoundly, but there must always be a give and take in his relations with any man. He did admire Coleridge, but the man who had written *Christabel* and *The Ancient Mariner* only distantly resembled the portly person who shuffled along the Highgate lanes emitting an unquenchable stream of talk to which one must listen in silence as it never stopped long enough for any one else to get a word in edgewise. Keats, pulled, harried, whirled hither and thither in a hundred different eddies of feeling and perception, had no leisure to give to what did not concern him, and this sample of Coleridge's amazing conversation served to prove that nothing concerned him here. Coleridge's poetry said much that concerned him very nearly; Coleridge himself, nothing. He did not repeat the experience.

Coleridge's impression of the meeting is recorded in his *Table Talk*. To him, who talked, the two miles were but a moment of time. His recollection of the event is interesting for many reasons, although, having been taken down thirteen years later, it is not likely to be very accurate. In the *Table Talk*, Mr. Green's name is left blank; I have added it to Coleridge's account, which reads:

> "A loose, slack, not well-dressed youth met Mr. Green and myself in a lane near Highgate. Green knew him and spoke. It was Keats. He was introduced to me, and stayed a minute or so. After he had left us a little way, he came back and said: 'Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand!' 'There is death in that

hand,' I said, when Keats was gone; yet this was, I believe, before the consumption showed itself distinctly."

It is impossible not to see that Coleridge's memory played him false in several particulars here, but the hand is important. Keats and his doctors were deceived as to the state of his health, yet to a highly sentient man like Coleridge the mere touch of his hand spelt disease. Mr. Green explained Coleridge's feeling by saying that to him Keats's hand felt "cold and clammy." [1] A recently published version of the same occurrence, written down after a conversation with Coleridge by Mr. John Frere in 1829, has much the same story to tell. In part, it says:

[2] C. "Poor Keats, I saw him once. Mr. Green, whom you have heard me mention, and I were walking out in these parts, and we were overtaken by a young man of very striking countenance whom Mr. Green recognized and shook hands with, mentioning my name; I wish Mr. Green had introduced me for I did not know who it was. He passed on, but in a few moments sprung back and said, 'Mr. Coleridge, allow me the honour of shaking your hand.' I was struck by the energy of his manner, and gave him my hand. He passed on, and we stood still looking after him, when Mr. Green said, 'Do you know who that is? That is Keats, the poet.' 'Heavens!' said I, 'when I shook him by the hand there was death!' That was about two years before he died.

F. But what was it?

C. I cannot describe it. There was a heat and a dampness in the hand. To say that his death was caused by the Review is absurd, but at the same time it is impossible adequately to conceive the effect which it must have had on his mind. It is very well for those who have a place in the world and are independent to talk of these things, they can bear such a blow, so can those who have a strong religious principle; but all men are not born Philosophers,

[1] *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Note.

[2] *A Talk with Coleridge*, edited by Miss E. M. Green. *Cornhill Magazine*, April, 1917.

> and all men have not those advantages of birth and education. Poor Keats had not, and it is impossible I say to conceive the effect which such a Review must have had upon him, knowing as he did that he had his way to make in the world by his own exertions, and conscious of the genius within him."

It is quite obvious that this version of the meeting is the more correct of the two. Nobody else describes Keats as loose and slack, while everyone agrees that he had a striking countenance and great energy of manner. Evidently Coleridge had forgotten a good deal of his original impression when, three years later, he dictated the passage in his *Table Talk*. What is most remarkable, however, is that Keats had been dead only eight years when the conversation with Mr. Frere took place; yet, although to the world at large he was practically unknown, to the literary world he was "Keats, the poet," and Coleridge speaks of his "genius" as an indisputable fact. Coleridge's sane and perspicacious remarks on the effect of the *Quarterly* review upon him are well nigh extraordinary, considering that the legend of his having been killed by the review was rife at the time, having been given peculiar currency by Shelley's *Adonais* and Byron's lines on Keats in *Don Juan*:

> "Strange that the mind, that very fiery particle,
> Should let itself be snuffed out by an article."

It will be remembered that Hunt also speaks of Keats's hand,[1] but to what period his remarks have reference he does not state.

Keats returned to his letter the next day with the first mention of Fanny Brawne which he had allowed to creep into it. Mrs. Brawne had appeared several times, but Fanny had been carefully excluded; even now, her appearance was the merest peep. "Brown this morning is writing some Spenserian stanzas against Mrs., Miss Brawne and

[1] See Vol. I, p. 258.

me," he says, "so I shall amuse myself with him a little: in the manner of Spenser —" Nothing in that to raise a suspicion as to the true state of affairs in George's or Georgiana's mind, nothing at all to enlighten them, unless they were sagacious enough to understand the implications of certain poems which followed. The stanzas on Brown are passable fooling, no more; their value for us is that they show the itch to write verse persisting. But a little farther on Keats has something vital to relate. Ostrich-like, he thinks the true content of his communication is hidden. But is it? Not to us, at least. And the tale he has to tell refers to a little time back; only the sonnet, which was its outcome, seems to belong to a very recent moment. The question for us is, did this sonnet precede the *Bright Star*? I confess myself unable to answer, since it is impossible to say just when this part of the letter was written; there are no more dates in it until the very end, when we have, first, the thirtieth of April, and then the third of May. What Keats says to his brother and sister-in-law is this:

> "The fifth canto of Dante pleases me more and more — it is that one in which he meets with Paulo and Francesca. I had passed many days in rather a low state of mind, and in the midst of them I dreamt of being in that region of Hell. The dream was one of the most delightful enjoyments I ever had in my life. I floated about the whirling atmosphere as it is described with a beautiful figure, to whose lips mine were joined, as it seemed for an age — and in the midst of all this cold and darkness I was warm — even flowery tree-tops sprung up, and we rested on them, sometimes with the lightness of a cloud, till the wind blew us away again. I tried a sonnet upon it — there are fourteen lines but nothing of what I felt in it — O that I could dream it every night."

It needs no knowledge of the theory of dreams and their interpretation as set forth by Freud to grasp the meaning of this. Those who believe in the Freudian hypothesis, and

find pleasure in examining literature according to the tenets of psycho-analysis, have a perfect study to their hand in this sonnet and Keats's introduction to it. For me, I prefer to let the obvious speak for itself. Vicarious though a dream joy may be, it is none the less a joy. If morning brought only the half satisfaction of an unreal experience, the strange, superlatively poignant sensations of that experience did in themselves hold a modicum of truth. The experience was false to one kind of fact, but eminently true to another kind, the imaginative. Yet it must be admitted that the truth of imaginative experience, when the passional side of life is in question, is deeply involved in danger — the danger of losing hold upon the actual to find solace in the purely visional. That Keats was too robust a man to do this, we see at every turn. This is the sole evidence we have of the languor of sensual dreaming either in his letters or his poems. He suffered intensely and continuously, but the very force and clarity of his nature forbade him from indulging in the ready opiate of unreal adventure. Considering the intensity of his feelings, and the extraordinary fervour and vividness of his imaginative conceptions, it is nothing short of amazing to see how sane and whole his life was, how single to itself and to the ideal he had set up. I do not mean that Keats reasoned all this out, as he might have done had he lived to-day, but that the unconscious sanity of the man brought about this result.

Keats was quite right in saying that he had succeeded in getting nothing of his dream into his sonnet. In spite of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's exceedingly high opinion of it, I cannot count it as even approaching his best work. Even Rossetti was forced to admit the flaw of the false rhyme of "slept" and "bereft," and the fact that, as Rossetti points out,[1] "this anomaly is all the more curious when we consider the sort of echo it gives of a line in 'Endymion,'

[1] From a letter from Rossetti to Buxton Forman.

'So sad, so melancholy, so bereft'" [1]

does not seem an adequate excuse for what is certainly a weakness in construction. There are other weaknesses in the sonnet; for instance, the equivocal rhythm of the first line,[2] which can be made to take the iambic beat only by misplacing the natural accent of the words. These are slight things, of course, and could easily be overlooked if the sonnet as a whole were of finer stuff. Unfortunately it has faults which keep it from mounting at any point into the sparkling air of perfect expression. In the first place, Keats could not really get in touch with his theme until the ninth line. The whole beginning up to this point is introduction, and dull and discursive introduction at that. "The dragon world with all its hundred eyes" is a *cliché* in thought if not expressly in form. One stale figure, "snow clad" is scarcely saved by applying it to skies; but this Keats did see and alter, "snow cold skies" was infinitely better and almost redeems its line. The last line, being an alexandrine, is worth noticing; there are but two other instances of Keats having ended a sonnet with an alexandrine,[3] his having done so here is in accord with the desire for change in the sonnet structure which was growing upon him. How far this desire led him, we shall see before long.

*As Hermes once took to his feathers light* seems to have been written directly into the first volume of the Cary's *Dante* he had taken with him on his Scotch tour. There were several false starts, for the sonnet did not get going easily. The first is on the inside of the recto cover; for the second, he turned the book round and began on the inside of the verso cover; the third, and last, is written on the last end-paper, and here the sonnet is copied in full.

That Keats told Fanny Brawne of his dream, and that both he and she attached a special significance to this sonnet, and, by inference, to the passage which had

[1] *Endymion* Bk. II. Line 685. [2] See Vol. I, p. 116. [3] *To a Friend who sent me some Roses*, and *On sitting down to read "King Lear" once again.*

inspired it, is evident from two things. One, that Keats gave the book, with his sonnet in it, to Fanny Brawne; the other, that on the flyleaf of Volume I Fanny Brawne copied the *Bright Star* sonnet. This proves nothing as to the chronological priority of either poem, but does seem to relate them as to time, and gives a strong impression of their belonging to the same period psychologically in Fanny Brawne's mind. Personally, I think it probable that Fanny Brawne had already been given the *Bright Star* sonnet some days previously to receiving the *Hermes*, and feeling for both sonnets in much the same way, copied the first into her new, and very dear, gift, so that she might always have them both together and both with the passage from Dante.

That Fanny Brawne was anything but cold, we can plainly see by this little action. And we can see something else, that the lovers were enjoying a time of happiness and confidence. We can read between the lines to any extent here; the sonnets and their position in the *Dante* — one in his handwriting, one in hers — give us every permission.

Keats's almost buoyant happiness just at this time appears in a letter written on April seventeenth to his sister Fanny. His spirits were sky-high when he wrote this delightful bit of fooling:

> "O there is nothing like fine weather, and health, and Books, and a fine country, and a contented Mind, and diligent habit of reading and thinking, and an amulet against the ennui — and, please heaven, a little claret wine cool out of a cellar a mile deep — with a few or a good many ratafia cakes — a rocky basin to bathe in, a pad nag to go you ten miles or so; two or three sensible people to chat with; two or three spiteful folkes to spar with; two or three odd fishes to laugh at and two or three mumskul[l]s to argue with — instead of using dumb bells on a rainy day —"

And here follows the rhyme, *Two or three Posies*. In his list of delights, Keats does not mention the joy he was then

experiencing, but in his "contented Mind" we see very clearly a shadow picture of Fanny Brawne.

Did Keats's circle suspect any engagement as yet? No, I think not. Severn has told that, early in the Spring of 1819, Keats took him to call on the Brawnes. But he seems not to have had the faintest idea then, nor indeed until his journey to Italy with Keats, that there was anything particular between Keats and the young daughter of the house; and he has expressly stated that he had no knowledge of there being a definite engagement until after Keats's death. Brown, who had Fanny Brawne and Keats under his nose all day, week in and week out, can scarcely have been in complete ignorance of facts so patent for any denizen of the double house to see, but how soon Keats confided in him we do not know. Mr. and Mrs. Dilke probably suspected a great deal, although their removal to Westminster may have made them rather slower in guessing the exact truth than would have been the case had they remained at Hampstead. For any general knowledge of the state in which affairs really were, I think we cannot look much before the Winter of 1820, and even then only where the most intimate of the group were concerned. Haslam, for instance, heard nothing until after Keats had left England. After all, the fact that the two families lived under the same roof and shared the same garden gave the lovers every opportunity to cheat the prying eyes of interested friends, and we may be very sure that Keats took great care that visitors to Brown's half of the premises should go away no wiser than they came.

Brown was a sociable spirit, and so was Keats until illness made him otherwise. They liked to have their friends come out from town as often as they would. We learn of the Dilkes coming out to dinner and of Hunt doing the same; of a "claret feast" somewhere, at which were present Dilke, Reynolds, Brown, and various others, "We all got a little tipsy — but pleasantly so"; of a visit with Hunt to Sir

John Leicester's Gallery, and another with Severn to the British Museum; of various calls on Mrs. Wylie; of occasional jaunts to the theatres; even of a rout at Sawrey's "which was made pleasant by Reynolds's being there." Once Keats's sociability proved a little too much for him. Here is his account of a fatiguing day:

> "Yesterday I could not write a line I was so fatigued for the day before I went to town in the morning called on your Mother, and returned in time for a few friends we had to dinner. These were Taylor, Woodhouse, Reynolds — we began cards at about 9 o'Clock, and the night coming on and continuing dark and rainy they could not think of returning to town. So we played at Cards till very daylight — and yesterday I was not worth a sixpence."

What day this "yesterday" was, is problematical, but as this is the part of the letter in which Keats quotes his review of *Peter Bell*, and that review came out on Sunday, the twenty-fifth, we may be fairly certain that he was writing during the week beginning on Monday, the nineteenth. There appears to be a break after the quotation, for Keats goes on: "The other night I went to the Play[1] with Rice, Reynolds and Martin . . . that was on Saturday — I stopt at Taylor's on Sunday with Woodhouse — and passed a quiet sort of pleasant day." By tallying up the various apparent fresh beginnings in the letter since the date of April fifteenth, it seems evident that the Sunday spent at Taylor's was the eighteenth. Among other doings of the ensuing week, Keats went to the Panorama in Leicester Square, which had two views on exhibition just then, one of the North Coast of Spitzbergen, the other of St. Petersburg, each requiring an entrance fee of one shilling.[2] Keats seems to have economized by going to only one of these exhibits, or at least only one made an impression upon him, but that made a great deal. It is with the ut-

[1] According to Keats, this was "a new dull and half damn'd opera call'd 'the Heart of Mid Lothian.'"

[2] Leigh's *New Picture of London*. 1819.

most enthusiasm that he describes the picture of Spitzbergen to George, and as his attitude toward it is a proof of his avidness for all kinds of experience, real or vicarious, his intelligent interest in every kind of fact — a quality which so ably balanced his preoccupation with matters of fancy — I give it here:

> "I have been very much pleased with the Panorama of the Ship at the north Pole — with the icebergs, the Mountains, the Bears, the Wolves — the seals, the Penguins — and a large whale floating back above water — it is impossible to describe the place."

One of the most refreshing things about Keats is his perfect lack of pose. He was too great an artist to despise what was not "artistic." Everything was grist to his mill which gave him a new idea, something which his mind could work upon and assimilate. He never allowed theory to interfere with adventure, as is the habit with little souls aspiring after the æsthetic. Formulæ annoyed him, he was a free spirit.

Immediately after the description of the Panorama, there is a new date: "Wednesday Evening," a Wednesday which we must suppose to have been April twenty-eighth. This date is very important because, following at once upon it, Keats copies *La Belle Dame Sans Merci.* As the poem has several corrections in it, and an abortive beginning to the second line of the eleventh stanza, we may conclude that it had just been composed. This would seem to determine the day on which it was written as being April twenty-eighth, 1819.

Leigh Hunt is responsible[1] for our knowledge of what is probably the fact, that Keats got the idea of his poem from the title of a translation, formerly imputed to Chaucer, of a poem by Alain Chartier, the court poet of Charles the

[1] In an introduction to the poem when it was printed in the *Indicator* on May 10, 1820; reprinted in Buxton Forman's Library Edition of Keats's works.

Seventh of France. This title — none other indeed than *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy* — had already intrigued him, for he took it for the name of the Provençal ditty sung by Porphyro to Madeline in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. That Keats, in his second use of it, gave the last word its French spelling, is indicative of his sense of taste and the extent to which it had fascinated him. But there was more in this old English translation to set Keats on his way, for a note prefixed to the poem explained that M. Alain "framed this dialogue between a gentleman and a gentlewoman, who finding no mercy at her hand dieth for sorrow." The point for us to notice is that it was the title and this note that gave Keats his *Belle Dame* and not the poem itself, which, as Sir Sidney Colvin says, is "a cold allegoric dialogue." The hunt for sources, ever dear to the heart of scholars, is rather more important than usual here, for by it I believe we learn the true genesis of the poem, and considerable of the workings of Keats's mind at just this time. We will, then, go into the matter a little and see what we may find.

After commenting, much as Sir Sidney has done, on Chartier's poem, Professor de Sélincourt decides that "in idea and atmosphere Keats's poem is closer to Spenser's description of Phædria." This description is to be found at the beginning of the Sixth Canto of the Second Book of the *Faerie Queene*. In Spenser, a knight, wandering beside a river, encounters a lady in a small boat. The lady is singing gaily to herself, but on the knight's calling to her she draws in to the shore and takes him into the boat, with the ostensible intention of ferrying him across the river. Once on board, however, the lady, who is "fresh and fayre," essays to charm the knight in various ways. She tells him "merry tales" which she drowns with "laughter vaine" and turns "all her pleasaunce to a scoffing game." Then she falls to decking her head with garlands and putting "fresh flowrets" about her neck. The knight is greatly

delighted at all this and asks her name, which the lady tells him is Phædria and adds that she is a servant to Acrasia, whom they both know to be an enchantress. After a while, the boat touches at an island. The pair land, and the lady guides the knight to a "shady dale," where she takes his head upon her lap and lulls him to sleep with a "love lay." As soon as he is fast asleep, she pours "liquors strong" upon his eyes to keep him so, gets into her boat and departs. From this point, Spenser's tale has no resemblance to Keats's.

The first thing to be noted for a comparative analysis is that the whole feeling of Spenser's episode is totally unlike that of Keats. Let us tabulate the likenesses and unlikenesses between the two poems. For the parallels: A knight meets a beautiful lady who makes love to him. She wears a garland on her head, and leads him to a retired place where she sings to him and where he falls asleep. She has knowledge of herbs. She is connected with an enchantress. The knight being asleep, she deserts him. For the differences: Spenser's lady comes in a boat. She is full of mirth. She takes the knight into her boat instead of the knight placing her on his "pacing steed." She scoffs and wantons, whereas Keats's lady never ceases weeping and lamenting. In Keats's poem, the knight takes an active part in the love-making; in Spenser's, he is perfectly passive. In Spenser, the lady puts garlands on her own head; in Keats, the knight makes a garland for her. There is no dream in Spenser's poem, and the whole dénouement of Keats's tale is quite other than Spenser's, whose knight awakes in shame to think that he has lost so much time in "slouthfull sleepe," and with no thought of the lady endeavours to leave the island.

Certain actions, then, Keats seems to have taken from Spenser, but his atmosphere he must certainly have found elsewhere, or at least whatever of it he did not invent himself, which was far the greater part. I think no one has ever

thought of seeking for the colouring of Keats's poem in *Palmerin of England*, and yet there is so much of it in that book that it must be taken into careful consideration. We know that Keats was reading *Palmerin* at this time, and in *Palmerin* forlorn knights abound. The type of fairy lore made use of in *La Belle Dame* is ever present in *Palmerin*. It is true, there is no event in that book which bears the faintest resemblance to what we may term the plot of *La Belle Dame*, but there is nearly everything else. For instance, Keats's description of the melancholy "Knight-at-arms," "so haggard and so woebegone," is tallied in many places. To give only a few: In the first volume, we read that Palmerin in grief, thinking that his lady, Polinarda, does not care for him, that he has offended her, will take no food, "he remained, leaning upon one hand with his eyes fixed upon the fountain below him . . . With this he paused awhile, weakness depriving him both of strength and breath to express the words which sorrow and love suggested." It will be remembered that Keats's knight loiters by a lake, which in this passage is parallelled by the fountain. A little later on in the same volume is: "And in these thoughts, *sad one hour*, *and sadder another*, he travelled on." The words italicized here, Keats scored, which shows the impression they made upon him. In the second volume, we find: "And if at any time he was at leisure he passed it in melancholy contemplation under the trees, recounting his sorrows." Again, we have this particularly striking resemblance: "lying with his face over that clear and quiet water, he began to call his lady Polinarda to mind, and the length of time it was since he had seen her . . . the passion therefore became so strong upon him, that his strong heart failed, and such was the power of these fantastic thoughts over him, that with the semblance of one dead he lay at the foot of the willow trees."

We must not forget that Keats's knight met a lady "in the meads," who is described as "a faery's child" and

whose hair we are especially told was "long" and her eyes "wild." We are not directly told that she was in trouble of some sort, but that is clearly inferred. *Palmerin* gives us no exact reproduction of this, but some very close indications, as follows: At the very beginning of the book, a lady appears who is not only "fair by nature, but her attire made her seem fair," and "she was the daughter of the lady enchantress." Farther on in the same volume is another episode: "So it befel, that one day at evening, about half a league from the city of London, he espied a damsel on a white palfrey come riding toward him, her hair spread over her shoulders, and her garments seeming to be greatly misused; all the way as she rode, she used many shrieks, and grievous lamentations, filling the air with her cries." This is a traitorous young woman, a servant, or maid, to the sorceress Eutropa. In the fourth volume is an even more exact comparison: "while he of the Tyger was washing his hands and face, his helmet being placed upon a stone beside him [again there is water, be it observed], there rushed out a damsel from the thickest of the wood, with her hair dishevelled, her face streaming with tears, her colour gone, and her apparel all torn by the trees." A still better one is to be found in the second volume: "he espied a damsel come riding towards him, her hair loose, and she using such speed as the fear she was in occasioned." Keats's lady is not described as weeping until the grot is reached, but the fact is implied throughout. Keats's knight sets her on his "pacing steed" and leads her, as is shown by her bending to him when she sings. In *Palmerin*, ladies are constantly being picked up and placed on palfreys: "then placing her on her palfrey he rode with her and her company along the valley," "placing Arlanza on a palfrey which was brought her, he returned to his company, talking to her as they went." They are even led at times: "Primaleon, to pay Don Duardos something of the debt of their old friendship, would lead the queen

of Scots, his daughter-in-law's palfrey by the bridle, till she came to the palace gate."

There are references to garlands for the head in *Palmerin* as well as in the *Faerie Queene*, while Keats's line "And made sweet moan" is often duplicated in the old romance: "woeful moan of the ladies," "which may urge you to remember my moan," "who thus framed his moan." Keats's lady uses her grief as a means to get the knight into her toils, a practice quite common in *Palmerin*, where it is recounted: "The damsels whom Eutropa sent out, each using subtlety with tears and lying stories which craved help for some just cause"; also "preparing herself to a deceitful course, and intermeddling her talk with tears."

I have already said that there is no such tale in *Palmerin* as Keats wove for his poem, but there are certain parallel, if unrelated, parts of it. One of these tells of a damsel "of rare and excellent beauty" who has a wounded knight carried into her castle, which Knight, having recovered, would go his way, but "grieving to see him so bent upon departing, she strove with loving words to detain him . . . oftentimes confessing to him in plain words her love." We have seen that there is no "grot" in the *Faerie Queene*; in *Palmerin* there is a very large and fine one "like a gateway, hewn in the rock," and although the knight's reason for being there bears no sort of likeness to the reason which brought Keats's knight to his, there is some resemblance between the two, for Keats's cave is an "elfin grot," and the one in *Palmerin* "had for long time been the abode of famous enchanters." Keats's knight wakes on the "cold hill's side"; in *Palmerin*, Florian enters the cavern, "Then quickening his pace, it was not long before he found himself on the other side of the Sierra, in a great square field."

There is nothing resembling the dream in *Palmerin*, and yet I think that Keats obtained much of the picture of it from that work, for Florian, once more in the cave, "look-

ing round about the court, he saw that it was full of statues of famous men," and Keats's "pale Kings and Princes too" seems taken very directly from the description of the kings and princes embalmed in the mortuary temple on the Perilous Isle, which is one of the closing scenes of *Palmerin*.

I have dwelt on all this at so great length, because I wish it to prepare a statement which I am aware will be somewhat startling. It is, indeed, nothing more, nor less, than that I believe, after carefully examining all the data, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* not to be an autobiographical poem, and not connected, except in the most general way, with Keats himself and Fanny Brawne. Far from the poem bearing any reference to some tiff or misunderstanding between the lovers, I think it proves exactly the opposite — that the *rapprochement* of ten days before, evinced in the *Bright Star* and *As Hermes once took to his feathers light* sonnets, had suffered no change. Keats was in perfect cue for writing, as he would assuredly not have been had any sudden quarrel upset his equilibrium. And he was more than that, he was so abundantly free to apply himself to poetry that he could even experiment in new methods and modes. For *La Belle Dame* is essentially an experimental poem.

I have already pointed out[1] how earnestly Keats sought to discover his proper direction, and this was never more true than during the Winter and Spring of 1819. He had laboured intermittently at the epic form, as embodied in *Hyperion*, for months, but without, in his own opinion, attaining any great measure of success. He had begun it twice, as I shall explain in a later chapter, but neither attempt satisfied him. The second, that which we call *Hyperion*, seems to have been carried as far as we know it when, in April, he lent his manuscript to Woodhouse. Why none of Keats's biographers have made use of Woodhouse's remarks about this manuscript in a note in his copy of

[1] See Vol. I, p. 602.

*Endymion*,[1] I cannot conceive, for they are of the utmost importance, largely on account of the time when they were written. The note is carefully dated "April. 1819." What Woodhouse says is this: "K. lent me the fragment here alluded to for perusal. It contains 2 books & ½ — (about 900 lines in all). He said he was dissatisfied with what he had done of it; and should not complete it. This is much to be regretted." So we see that Keats's disgust with the poem long anticipated his statements on the subject to Reynolds in the following September. Already, by April, he had laid it aside, more or less definitely in his own opinion. Here, then, was a direction which appeared to have failed him. But the urge to find his way continued. The *Eve of St. Agnes*, however, he could not help seeing bore unmistakable signs of success; it was not finished to his satisfaction yet, but he was not in a mood for revision, only for creation. His old love, the age of chivalry, had stood him in good stead in *St. Agnes*, could he not attack it from a new angle and find a path in so doing? The idea was an inspiriting one, and he forthwith let his subconscious mind play with it a little. The result was a welding of an old ballad form with a type of atmosphere so novel as to be nothing short of astounding. Working from Chartier's intriguing title, with a hint from one of Spenser's stories and the absolutely enchanting properties which were scattered for him all through the four volumes of *Palmerin*, Keats suddenly and unexpectedly produced one of the finest poems in all literature, and a poem so utterly fresh that it opened to English poetry an entirely unexplored field. To us, familiars of the region through Keats's disciples, the pre-Raphaelites, *La Belle Dame* remains the chief of its *genre*, although the peculiar quality of its atmosphere is, necessarily, no longer so striking. It seems fair to assume that Keats never quite realized what marvelous pioneer work he had done in this one short poem, since it

[1] Owned by W. van R. Whitall, Esq., of New York.

remains the sole specimen of its kind which he wrote. But we must not forget how brief a time was left him to write, and how crowded with work that time was. Also, there is another thing: Keats's inveterate habit of keeping a number of poems going at once. When a mood was on him, he wrote as long as it lasted; if his mood changed, he dropped the poem on which he was engaged, then and there, and turned to something else. When the former mood returned, if it did, he went back to his abandoned poem. Frequently this occurred several times in the course of one poem. This is the reason for the various fragments found in his portfolios after his death. In these cases, he had died before the special moods required had happened to return.

*La Belle Dame Sans Merci* was the product of a very special mood indeed, and it did not happen to re-visit him during the remainder of his writing life, but it seems very probable that in this poem we have a clear indication of a direction which he would certainly have followed had time been vouchsafed him.

The "kisses four" with which Keats's knight closed the elfin damsel's "wild wild eyes" have been the source of much comment, and the first commentator was Keats himself. Immediately after copying the poem in the letter to George, he wrote:

> "Why four kisses — you will say — why four because I wish to restrain the headlong impetuosity of my Muse — she would have fain said 'score' without hurting the rhyme — but we must temper the Imagination as the Critics say with Judgement. I was obliged to choose an even number that both eyes might have fair play, and to speak truly I think two a piece quite sufficient. Suppose I had said seven there would have been three and a half a piece — a very awkward affair and well got out of on my side —"

This is most excellent fooling, but it covered a quandary. In specifying the exact number of kisses, Keats was simply

following the old ballad tradition, as he knew quite well; but the question was how well known would this tradition be to the majority of readers. To anyone unfamiliar with the quaint exactness of enumeration so beloved of the ancient balladists, was not the line open to ridicule? And any suspicion of ridicule was bound to shiver the atmosphere of the poem to atoms. So Keats, with his critical instinct jealously awake for the safety of his strange and beautiful atmosphere, proceeded to step outside his poem and ridicule it himself as an experiment. His was kindly ridicule, but what would that of the critics be? In the end, he distrusted his audience so thoroughly that he altered the line, and very much for the worse. When, a year later, the poem was printed in the *Indicator*, Keats was too worn out and discouraged to do battle for his original conception, and let Hunt persuade him to alterations which he probably would not have countenanced before his illness. In every case where Keats changed the poem, he committed a blunder, something very unusual with him, whose corrections were, almost without exception, improvements. We do not certainly know that Hunt was the instigator of the changes, Woodhouse may have had a hand in them for, in his Commonplace Book where the original is copied with only the slightest of differences from the letter version, there is a pencil note — written, Buxton Forman thinks, by Taylor — which reads: "Vide Album for alterations." Some of Keats's friends must have had the good sense to prefer the poem as Keats first wrote it, however, for Lord Houghton in his 1848 edition printed it as Woodhouse set it down. There is no sort of doubt that the best version is the one sent in the letter to George, and happily Professor de Sélincourt gives it letter perfect in his editions. It is a thousand pities that the *Indicator* version was ever resurrected; it ruins a perfect work of art.

Immediately after *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Keats copied another poem into his interminable letter. This

was the tripping little fragment known as the *Song of the Four Fairies*, although Keats entitled it *Chorus of Fairies*. It is really a dialogue between Salamander, the spirit of fire; Zephyr, the spirit of air; Dusketha, the spirit of earth; and Breama, the spirit of water. The poem has some agreeable conceits in it, but only one noteworthy passage, that in which Zephyr begs Breama to

[1] "Come with me, oer tops of trees,
To my fragrant Pallaces,
Where they ever floating are
Beneath the cherish of a Star
Call'd vesper."

At the end, Keats suddenly departs from his trochaic heptasyllables to break into a series of irregularly timed lines based upon a highly variable anapestic-iambic pattern whose four stresses alone link it to his original form. The audacious liberties of rhythm in which Keats indulges here are another proof of his longing for innovation, and the five lines in which he plays these pranks are rhythmically quite charming. The poem ends sharply on a short line as though the poet had become tired of it, as probably he had. Rossetti pronounced this poem as "unworthy of Keats at this period," and in spite of the rhythmical subtleties of the last lines, which no poet of Rossetti's period could be expected to relish, I imagine few people will feel called upon to disagree with him.

Nothing is more curious to watch, throughout these long letters, than the complete changes of interest and feeling which Keats underwent from day to day. We get only the barest conception of his personality if we attempt to isolate these gusts of thought from one another and study them in a series of unbroken divisions. During this last week of April, Keats was enormously occupied with poetry, but not

[1] Copied from a holograph. Author's Collection. This holograph differs slightly from both the version in the letter and that printed by Lord Houghton.

so much so as to exclude other intellectual interests. Directly after breaking off with the unfinished line of the *Four Fairies*, Keats starts abruptly on a new train of thought. So radical is this change that it seems as if this must be a new beginning which we should attribute to Thursday, April twenty-ninth, but I do not think so, I think the date changed earlier, and that the *Four Fairies* began the Thursday section. For what does his sharp stopping of the *Fairies* mean but that he has something else which he very much wants to say. Of course, I may be wrong in this; it does not matter very much either way. At any rate, his new preoccupation proved a very suggestive one. He begins:

> "I have been reading lately two very different books, Robertson's America and Voltaire's Siècle de Louis XIV. It is like walking arm in arm between Pizarro and the great-little monarch."

The contemplation of the state of the populace in the two countries leads him on to a series of reflections that, in sum, reveal the type of philosophy to which he was coming to adhere more and more. This whole passage is as near to a statement of a creed as Keats ever formulated. The passage is so long that it cannot be quoted in full, but in paraphrasing parts of it I have been careful to leave out nothing essential.

His argument starts from the following premise and query:

> "The whole appears to resolve into this — that Man is originally a poor forked creature subject to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest, destined to hardships and disquietude of some kind or other. If he improves by degrees his bodily accommodations and comforts — at each stage, at each ascent there are waiting for him a fresh set of annoyances — he is mortal and there is still a heaven with its Stars above his head. The most interesting question that can come before us is, How far by the persevering endeavors of a seldom appearing Socrates Mankind may be made happy —"

Supposing that, could it be effected, perfect happiness were ever attained on earth, Keats thinks that the thought of death could not be borne, and this thought, increasing in intensity with the years, would gather such an accumulation of misery into the last days of every man as to leave the sum total much what it is now, but deprive sorrow of its educational value. From this, he deduces a complete ethical system in this wise:

> "The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven. What a little circumscribed straightened notion! Call the world if you please 'The vale of Soul-making.' Then you will find out the use of the world (I am speaking now in the highest terms for human nature admitting it to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it) I say '*Soul-making*' — Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence. There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions — but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. Intelligencies are atoms of perception — they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God."

Postulating thus, he proceeds to propound his query and answer it as follows:

> "How then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them — so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence? How but by the medium of a world like this? This point I sincerely wish to consider because I think it a grander system of salvation than the christian religion — or rather it is a system of Spirit creation."

He finds this system to be "effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years." These materials are "the *Intelligence* — the

*human heart* (as distinguished from intelligence or Mind) and the *World or Elemental space*." Putting this, as he says, "in the most homely form possible," he goes on:

> "I will call the *world* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read — I will call the *human heart* the *horn Book* read in that School — and I will call the *Child able to read, the Soul* made from that *School* and its *horn book*. Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul? . . . Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, It is the Mind's Bible, it is the Mind's experience, it is the text from which the Mind or Intelligence sucks its identity. As various as the Lives of Men are — so various become their Souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence."

There is nothing particularly new in all this, be it admitted. The curious thing about it is that Keats should have worked it out for himself, living as he did among men who were quite contented with the orthodox teaching of the Church of England. Hunt and Shelley were the exceptions to this rule in the circle of Keats's friends, and neither man's religious opinions weighed a feather with him. So far as we know, Keats was not in the habit of reading philosophy, or delving into the mysteries of ancient religions, and there is no evidence to show that he had ever read Swedenborg, D'Holbach, Herder, or any of the thinkers who flooded the eighteenth century with novel theological doctrines, constructive or destructive. The point of view at which he had arrived seems to have been spun out of his own entrails, if I may use such an expression. It came from more than his heart, more than his mind, it sprang from the very mid-most of his being. It was the fine thread drawn from his ever strengthening ego.

His conclusions, when he reached them, were — for his surroundings, place, and moment — nothing short of subversive. They are:

> "This appears to me a faint sketch of a system of Salvation which does not offend our reason and humanity — I am convinced that many difficulties which christians labour under would vanish before it."

And after suggesting that Christianity may be derived from older religions, he dares a most heterodox theory, to wit:

> "Why may they not have made this simple thing even more simple for common apprehension by introducing Mediators and Personages in the same manner as in the heathen mythology abstractions are personified? . . . For as one part of the human species must have their carved Jupiter; so another part must have the palpable and named Mediator and Saviour, their Christ, their Oromanes and their Vishnu."

Keats had evidently read more along the lines of comparative religions than we are aware of, but in his case a hint was enough to start him exploring the spheres. It was not only in poetry that he was an experimenter; in thought also he was not content with barriers. Where his probing insight would have carried him had he lived, it is impossible to say. Already he was far beyond the bounds which confined his friends.

The next date in the letter is "Friday — April 30 —" and Keats at once begins:

> "Brown has been here rummaging up some of my old sins — that is to say sonnets. I do not think you remember them so I will copy them out as well as two or three lately written. I have just written one on Fame — which Brown is transcribing and he has his book and mine. I must employ myself perhaps in a sonnet on the same subject —"

Here follows one of the two sonnets on Fame, this one evidently improvised at the very moment of writing. It is not a good sonnet, and Keats got into a little trouble with the sestet. Writing in the Shakespearian mode, his sestet

should have consisted of a quatrain and a couplet; but here Keats, having written the first three lines in what was evidently intended to be quatrain form, suddenly brings in a new rhyme for his fourth line, rhymes his fifth with it, and forces his sixth to hark back to the second for its echo. This, I am sure, is no experimental effort, but a pure case of being stuck and getting out as best he can. The reason why I am convinced of this is that the second line originally ended with the word "taste," but when the fourth line with which it should rhyme was reached, the general sound of "taste" tricked him into the false rhyme "space." Perceiving his error almost immediately, and unable to find an appropriate word for his "grateful bees" which would rhyme with "space," realizing also that his "Undisturbed Lake has crystal space" was too good a line to lose, he gave up the quatrain form and put "feed" at the end of the second line. Another good line gave him the needed rhyme for "space," and forgetting for a moment the order of his rhymes, he finished with another nice line: "And spoil our pleasures in his selfish fire." Soon, however, seeing that he had left "feed" no companion, he scratched out his sixth line entirely and substituted the extremely weak "Spoilt his salvation by a fierce miscreed."

The second sonnet on Fame[1] is better technically, yet it is a singularly dull poem, and the semi-cynical, semi-jocose, tone of it is not alluring. The first line is an almost exact "steal" from Dryden, where in the Epilogue to the first part of the *Conquest of Grenada* is a passage beginning:

"Fame, like a little Mistress of the Town."[2]

This passage is, in idea, an almost perfect duplicate to

[1] These sonnets are printed in inverse order in all editions of Keats's poems. I deal with them here as they appear in the letter.

[2] This parallel was pointed out in a recent letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* by E. H. W. Meyerstein.

Keats's sonnet. The fact that, two months later, Keats was writing *Lamia* — a poem which shows clearly the influence of Dryden's versification — makes Keats's obvious theft here not a little important, for it seems to prove that he was reading Dryden with some intentness during the Spring, although he says nothing about it. Keats's indebtedness to Dryden in this sonnet seems to have escaped Sir Sidney Colvin's notice, but, because of it, the passage he quotes from Brown's *Britannia's Pastorals* seems superfluous.

There is a third sonnet in this group of which Keats says nothing, and we may reasonably assume it to be one of the exhumed "sins." It is entitled *To Sleep*, and would have been an excellent sonnet had it ever been revised, a good sonnet and something of an experiment, for while the octave consists of two quatrains in the regular Shakespearian manner, the sestet rhymes (does not, as a matter of fact, but was certainly meant to) in rather an odd way. The first line of it echoes the second and fourth lines of the octave, the second line follows the fifth and seventh of the octave, the last lines form a quatrain. As a matter of fact, in this quatrain Keats rhymed "lord" and "wards," which was clearly an oversight. In the transcript of the sonnet made by Woodhouse, "hoards" is written instead of "lord," but Lord Houghton printed the word as "lords." Readers may take their pick of the two versions; which Keats really meant, we cannot know.

How much before this thirtieth of April Keats wrote *To Sleep*, it is impossible to tell, but by the evidence of style and experimentation I feel sure it was quite a recent performance. It was, we know, written in 1819, for Woodhouse so dates it. That this strangely patterned sestet was intentional, there can be no manner of doubt. Keats was not in love with the couplet ending of the Shakespearian sonnet. He had sought to relieve its monotony in *As Hermes once took to his feathers light* by making the last line

an alexandrine; here he tried to break it up entirely. This desire to introduce something new and different into a traditional form places the sonnet definitely as belonging to this Spring. That hard-working, but very unpoetical, person, Buxton Forman, was much mystified by

> "Then save me or the passed day will shine
> Upon my pillow breeding many woes."

He wished "tressed" substituted for "passed" on the strength of a most inferior and fragmentary version in the copy of *Paradise Lost* given to Mrs. Dilke, and published in the *Athenæum* in 1872. This version is so unutterably bad, besides being unfinished, that I am very sure it represents an early, abandoned attempt. The difficult lines are really as plain as day. Any one who has suffered from insomnia will attest their absolute truth, for who, lying awake at night, has not found the events of the day before full of thorns to prick his sensitive midnight consciousness withal.

*To Sleep* is not an end to the poetry in the letter; not at all. Keats succeeds it with a preface to another poem, the *Ode to Psyche*. This, the first of his completed odes,[1] he introduces to George and Georgiana in these words:

> "The following Poem — the last I have written — is the first and the only one with which I have taken even moderate pains. I have for the most part dash'd off my lines in a hurry. This I have done leisurely — I think it reads the more richly for it, and will I hope encourage me to write other things in even a more peaceable and healthy spirit."

At last Keats had struck a direction which he could follow, happy in the conviction that he had found at least one medium perfectly fitted to his genius. He had already made a shot at it, in the fragment of the *Ode to Maia* written the year before at Teignmouth, but that poem he had been forced to leave in all its glorious incompleteness,

[1] The juvenile *Ode to Apollo* and the *Ode to Fanny* do not properly belong in this category.

the mood which produced it had never returned. Nor had it returned now, but something akin to it in attitude had come, and this something he had brought to a finish.

I am quite in accord with Sir Sidney Colvin in believing the *Psyche* to be the first of Keats's great odes in point of time. Does not he himself tell us so plainly when he declares this the only poem lately written with which he has taken pains? Could he have said as much had he already written the *Grecian Urn* or the *Ode on Melancholy*, and is it at all likely that if he had written these poems he would not have copied them into this letter to George? The *Ode on Indolence* clearly pronounces itself as composed later, as we shall see, and we know the *Nightingale* to have been written in May. There are other reasons for assigning to the *Psyche* the initial place among the odes; first and foremost, its distinct resemblance to the manner of *I Stood Tip-toe* in the first stanza, then the various harkings-back to some of his old preoccupations — the mountain pine,[1] for instance, while the "dark cluster'd trees" that "Fledged the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep,"[2] clearly points to his re-reading of his letters from Scotland. *Palmerin* crops up here, too, in the line:

"Nor virgin choir to make delicious moan."

and again

"O let me be thy choir and make a moan."

Professor de Sélincourt has remarked that a phrase from each of the three important odes of this period, the *Grecian Urn*, the *Ode on Melancholy*, and the *Nightingale*, is repeated, or nearly so, in the *Psyche*, and begs us to notice how, by this means, Keats "knits them all together." I cannot subscribe to Professor de Sélincourt's deduction; rather I believe that Keats used his *Psyche* as a quarry, and

[1] See Vol. I, p. 148. [2] See Vol. II, p. 31.

took the lines in question from it to put them into succeeding poems which he knew to be far better.

There is much of the younger Keats in this ode. "Tender eye-dawn of aurorean love," "fond believing lyre," "soft delight," these are the sort of expressions we find in his work of 1816, but which he had for the most part outgrown at this time. He is not betrayed into anything of the sort in his other odes. In fine, there is much beauty in the *Psyche*, and not a little weakness. Keats says that he took pains with the poem, but the pains were evidently not as rigorously employed as they might have been. There are two unrhymed lines in the published version, a slight blemish, but still a blemish where the pattern is a fully rhymed one. It is only fair to say, however, that in one of these cases the rhyme was originally there, but disappeared in revision. In all probability, Keats did not revise the poem until he was preparing the *Lamia* volume for publication, and at that time he was weary with illness and not his keenly perceptive self, although dropping rhymes by accident during the work of correction was all too common with him, as witness *Endymion*. It is instructive to note that those corrections done after his illness in 1820 are not so certainly wise as were his earlier ones. We have seen how he marred *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*; in this ode, he changed the delightful expression "freckle-pink" for flowers to the commonplace "silver-white." A final reason for giving to the *Psyche* the position of pioneer is that Keats does not seem to have quite settled into his stride when he wrote it, to have quite made up his mind what the particular form of this type of poem was to be. Later he crystallized his odes into a definite structure which he varied only in detail. This structure consisted principally of stanzas with an equal number of lines, the number being ten in all the odes except *To Autumn*, to which he permitted eleven.

After the *Ode to Psyche* in the letter, Keats wrote:

"Here endethe y$^{e}$ Ode to Psyche."

and at once, as a sort of fresh heading, he put in Latin:

"Incipit altera Sonneta."

I have spoken many times of the passion for experiment which seems to have dominated Keats all this Spring, and following this, his longing to alter the form of the sestets of his sonnets. Now, suddenly, he flares out in the unaccustomed rôle of iconoclast. The conventional sonnet, which he wrote superlatively well in both forms, no longer contented him; yet he wanted some sort of a sonnet, and forthwith proceeded to invent an entirely new one. The why of his doing so he explained to George:

> "I have been endeavouring to discover a better Sonnet Stanza than we have. The legitimate[1] does not suit the language over well from the pouncing rhymes — the other appears too elegiac — and the couplet at the end of it has seldom a pleasing effect — I do not pretend to have succeeded — it will explain itself."

The sonnet follows:

> [2]"If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,
> And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
> Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness,
> Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,
> Sandals more interwoven and complete
> To fit the naked foot of Poesy:
> Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress
> Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
> By ear industrious, and attention meet;
> Misers of sound and syllable, no less
> Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
> Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;
> So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
> She will be bound with garlands of her own."

[1] Petrarchan.

[2] In the letter, the sonnet does not go beyond the fourth line. It is quoted here from a version written in Sir Charles Dilke's copy of *Endymion*. Buxton Forman.

This is obviously merely a study for a rhyme-scheme, and this scheme is so interwoven and complicated that I will supplement the poem by giving it. It runs: A.B.C.A.B.D. C.A.B.C.D.E.D.E. The fourteen lines are preserved, but everything else is new, even the break at the end of the octave which relieved the monotony of the Petrarchan sonnet and gave a tilt to the subject that started the sestet with a new zest, is gone; and the somewhat same effect got by the quatrains and final couplet of the Shakespearian form is to seek. This makes Keats's sonnet a bit monotonous. He has effectively done away with the "pouncing rhymes," but at the expense of losing the chime of rhyme-return altogether. It is gleefully pointed out by the sticklers for convention that Keats never wrote another sonnet after this recipe. Perhaps he never would have done so; but it should also be said that he wrote only two sonnets after this, and both of them were highly personal and emotional pieces in which he took the first form that came to his hand, being in no mood for anything save to pour out the feelings in his heart. If he stopped experimenting in sonnet form, he did not stop in his other chief form, the ode. Each of his odes was an experiment within a pattern which he had largely found for himself. When we realize that a bare nine months comprised the whole rest of his writing life, we shall not be so sure as most critics profess themselves to be as to what he would, or would not, have done had he lived. The subject of this experimental sonnet is of itself sufficient to prove how much he desired to escape from the strait-jacket of tradition, to prune all semblance of "dead leaves" from his own fresh luxuriance. Yet we must not fail to observe that it is his ear principally which is unsatisfied, it is a new music that he craves. In the matter of poetic "music," Keats has had few equals.

Keats closed his long letter to George with this little paragraph:

"This is the third of May, and everything is in delightful forwardness; the violets are not withered before the peeping of the first rose."

It is quite evident that, from the middle of April until the middle of May, Keats was really happy. These were the last weeks of his life when he can be said to have been so. Cruel as fate had been to him hitherto, its extreme of cruelty was to come. At the moment, he was enjoying a peaceful and fruitful interlude. The writing fever was by no means assuaged by the poems sent to George; on the contrary, it was only just begun. To May, belong the four remaining odes known to have been written at Hampstead. Their dates are problematical, but from internal and external evidence I believe their order to be: the *Grecian Urn* first; then the *Ode on Melancholy*: after that, the *Nightingale*; and finally the *Ode on Indolence*.

The first thing to be noted about the *Grecian Urn* is that the inspiration for it came from the Elgin Marbles, from that part of the frieze of the Parthenon which shows the cattle being brought to the sacrifice. No urn had anything to do with it, but the reason for the urn in the title is not hard to discover. By far the greater part of the Parthenon frieze is taken up with cavalcades of men on horses or driving chariots, and it is precisely these parts which most people think of when the frieze is mentioned. Also, in Keats's day, the frieze was commonly spoken of as the *Elgin Marbles*. If Keats had called his poem *Ode on the Elgin Marbles*, not only would the title have been an ugly one, it would have been a misleading and confusing one as well. For where in his poem were the cavalcades of horses, and the fine virile youths astride of them? The attention of most readers would have been taken up in seeking for these, and only on a second reading would the poem have been fully apprehended. Yet it was imperative that the idea of Greece should be given at the outset, Greek sculp-

ture must somehow be implied. Keats had seen Grecian urns in fact and picture, and the word "urn" is an attractive one and full of artistic significance. With the idea of attributing his bas-relief to an imaginary urn, the difficulty was solved, and the poem forthwith became *Ode on a Grecian Urn.*

No poem of Keats's has had its origins more diligently sought for than the *Grecian Urn.* But in this case such searching seems peculiarly unnecessary. Keats had spent two years intermittently gazing at the Elgin Marbles, he had pored again and again over volumes of drawings from the antique in Haydon's studio, he had read Goldsmith's *History of Greece* at Haydon's instigation, and he had done all this with an attention and imagination ever on the alert. How keen was his interest in these things may be seen by the fact that a tracing from a plate of the so-called Sosibos vase, made by him, was discovered in the Dilke Collection.[1] (The book in which he found the plate was the *Musée Napoléon*, a work descriptive of the classic spoils filched by the conquering Napoleon and brought to Paris. The text of these four monumental volumes was illustrated by outline engravings.) With various of Claude Lorraine's pseudo-classic pictures, he was also familiar; and in his visits to the British Museum he had not spent all his time with the Elgin Marbles, there was, as Sir Sidney Colvin points out, the Townley collection, and others as well. Granted all these things, they are the merest spark of a match to flash the eager fire of his imagination. In no other poem that Keats wrote do we see his imagination more actively at work, or more perfectly master of its own expression. The poem is well-nigh flawless from beginning to end. It is a picture, an experience, and a creed, all in one. It is the world without and the world within. The "delightful forwardness" of the season is quite as much of a "source" as any of those we have been

[1] Colvin.

considering. The "happy, happy boughs," the "more happy, happy love," were with him daily, as was also the consciousness that these things do not last forever. Where else does his imagination give us a picture with such economy of detail as in his lines about the little town? What a lightning stroke of genius to depict it only to empty it, leaving it solitary in the morning sun, and, by a swift transition from gay to grave, evoking its eternal desolation. Gay and grave, that is it — Keats tuned to his highest pitch of evocative creation, burning with so clear and white an emotion that all his senses, all his thoughts and beliefs, fuse together into a presentation which is at once firm and infinitely moving, just, but wistfully disillusioned, cordially frank, yet very nearly perfectly concealed. The poem is a magnificent example of joy through resignation, for Keats had looked with ecstasy and anguish at life, at love, at art, and had learnt to submit to immutable law, to grant the necessity of his school of Soul-making, perchance, indeed, to find it good. Even if he had never heard of it, he had accepted Leonardo da Vinci's phrase:

"Cosa bella mortal passa e non d'arte."

I think that when Keats wrote the *Grecian Urn* he was at the very zenith of his development, more entirely single, whole, and undivided, more completely master of his qualities, all of them, than ever before or ever again. Not that he did not write superb poetry after this, but that his later work was produced in conflict, the conflict of his genius warring against outward conditions. He transcended them by the very act of composition, yet in doing so was forced to leave his everyday self behind. The perfection of the *Grecian Urn* sprang from just the fact that it was written by all his many selves working together in the complete harmony of absolute concord.

What happened to alter his mood, we shall never know. Keats, being himself, was always more or less prone to a

consciousness of the reverse of any happiness. There is a tale of ancient China wherein is described a mirror on the back of which was carved an image of a crane, the emblem of age and fate. This mirror was fashioned in such a manner that any one looking into it would see, not only his own face, but the shadow of the bird behind hovering dimly like an omen. Keats's joys too often presented themselves to him clouded by the shadow of a brooding fate. Possibly the month-long solace of a comprehending unity of ideas with Fanny Brawne had been marred by some incident or word. Certain it is that, whatever the reason, Keats's placidity broke down, not enough to debar him from writing, but sufficiently to strike a sharp note of bitterness through his work.

The order of the next three odes is by no means positive, and I do not offer it as such. I adopt the order I follow merely on account of probabilities, because it seems to fit best with the facts as we know them. From the third until the thirteenth of May there are no letters; from that time until the end of the month there are two to his sister Fanny, but they contain nothing pertinent.[1] On the ninth of June, he wrote to Miss Jeffrey that he had been "very idle lately," and a letter to the same lady on the thirty-first of May shows him in the sad mood which marks all these odes. It seems to me that this sadness ran a definite course, beginning with irony and violence, changing gradually to a passive melancholy, and ending with exhaustion. In that belief, I have determined the order in which I deal with the odes. Of course, I may be wrong.

Perhaps to speak of the *Ode on Melancholy* as being written in a mood of irony and violence may seem a bit extreme, particularly as the one really violent stanza, that which originally began the poem, was rejected in favour of the present opening. This is a subdued violence, no doubt, but violence nevertheless. Seek not for melancholy in melancholy things, cries the poet. If sorrow craves

[1] There is also a short note to Haslam telling of the receipt of a letter from George.

company, it is not in the contemplation of sad things that it will find it. No indeed, the grand paradox, the profound irony, of grief is to know itself partnered always with those very objects most proper to give pleasure. There is more misery for the unhappy in a rose, the iridescent hues of a wave breaking on shingle, a mass of full-blown peonies, than in all the traditionally sorrowful things that imagination can summon. Grief abides forever in beauty to the sentient man, that is the theme of the poem. It is the direct antithesis of Keats's attitude in the *Grecian Urn*, where the realization of the eternal quality of art binds and heals the bitter wounds incident upon mere living.

Irony and pain are in these lines:

> "Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
> Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
> And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes."

Such behaviour could only be possible to the shallow and disillusioned, as Keats knew right well. Such counsel to himself was the height of sarcasm, rending the heart from which it sprang. For the lady herself is mortal, and like all mortals must die. The thought of love is inextricably woven with the thought of death, and no wave of the eternal peace forever enshrouding the calm majesty of great art can touch his feverish resistance to the savage cruelty of this knowledge. Utterly vanished and gone is the chastened admission of the universe which produced the *Grecian Urn* and filled it with delicate, sober, and satisfying beauty.

The third, and final, stanza of the *Ode on Melancholy* is an almost angry denial of the attitude taken in stanzas three and five of the *Grecian Urn*. This positive answer to the stand taken in these stanzas of the *Grecian Urn* seems so evidently intentional that it is largely upon it that I base my belief in the priority of that poem. To make my point clear, I will quote the stanza in question:

"She dwells with Beauty — Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung."

The *Ode on Melancholy* seems so little literary and so markedly autobiographical that I find the suggestions as to its possible origins very much out of place. Suppose that Keats had been feeding his wounded sensibilities on the splendid brutalities of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, postulates and illustrative anecdotes of the Burton type may easily have chimed with certain moods, but scarcely with the one embodied here. Granted that Keats was familiar with Fletcher's *Nice Valour*, and its lines lauding melancholy and calling it by the fond name of "sweetest melancholy," does anything in Keats's ode resemble them? I think not. Let us, then, seek no farther for the source of the poem than a state of mind with which we, who have followed Keats for so long with a minute curiosity, must by now be sufficiently familiar. Keats did not find his paradox in Burton, Fletcher, or any other of his forerunners, but in the amazed and disgusted perusal of his own heart.

The *Ode on Melancholy* is not nearly as good a poem as the *Grecian Urn*, nor should we expect it to be so under the circumstances. If his sad mood were not strong enough to stop his writing entirely, it was at least strong enough to hamper it. Nevertheless there are fine lines and passages in the poem, and Keats and his friends were abundantly right to publish it in the *Lamia* volume. The wisdom of including the *Psyche*, on the other hand, is decidedly open to question.

Supposing my theory as to the progress and duration of Keats's despondent mood to be correct, there is nothing surprising in the fact that his next ode, the *Nightingale*, should be among his most perfect poems. He was still unhappy, but the poignance of the feeling was so far blunted as to leave his imagination free to take possession of his faculties for a space and do with them what it would.

If the *Grecian Urn* is a practically flawless example of clear, unvexed, wide-eyed beauty, the *Ode to a Nightingale* is a no less perfect presentation of absolute magic, a magic shimmering over profound depths of meaning and sensation. The overtones in the *Grecian Urn* are slight, the surface of the poem has an unrippled clarity about it which needs no more troubled music, no undershining reflections, to enhance its effect. The *Nightingale*, on the other hand, is strung and laced with strange, fantastic harmonies, with dissonances resolving faintly in the travelling air; it is fraught of foam and glancing shadows, of hints of mutability beyond the conscious ken. The *Grecian Urn* touches us to delight and admiration; the *Nightingale* stirs our hearts, grieves and satisfies them, and lingers on as a half-remembered echo of ourselves. The whole approach to the two poems is entirely different. Matthew Arnold, in his essay *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, has noted this difference of approach and commented upon it. The "little town" stanza in the *Grecian Urn* he calls "as Greek as a thing from Homer or Theocritus; it is compared with the eye on the object, a radiancy and light clearness being added," and again: "Keats passes at will from the Greek power to that power which, as I say, is Celtic; from his: —

'What little town by river or seashore' —

to his: —

'White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves'

or his: —

> '. . . magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn —'

in which the very same note is struck as in those extracts which I quoted from Celtic romance, and struck with authentic and unmistakable power."

To me, this "little town" stanza is not so much Greek as Japanese. The Greek presentation is simple, single, clear, but it is not quite this simplicity or clarity. What this stanza seems to me to resemble most closely are the Japanese colour prints of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have already pointed out Keats's likeness in certain passages to these prints,[1] here is another example. If it be objected that Keats knew nothing of Japan or Japanese art, let it be remembered that neither did he know anything of Greek literature in the original, and the translations of it in his day were about as far from Greek in feeling as can be imagined. Keats's poetic instinct was exceedingly delicate and capable of apprehending a variety of *nuances*. It was no effort for his genius to go from the clear, unornamented, carefully outlined type of poetry represented in the "little town" stanza of the *Grecian Urn*, to the richly embroidered and fulminatingly coloured type of the *Nightingale*. A volume might be written tracing the varieties of style, attack, and presentation employed by Keats in his poems. I can do no more than hint of them here.

The story of the genesis of the *Ode to a Nightingale* was told by Brown to Lord Houghton. I give it in Brown's words:

> "In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where

[1] See Vol. II, p. 41.

> he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind some books."

Brown goes on to say that the scraps were "four or five in number" and that the writing was "not well legible" so that "it was difficult to arrange the stanzas," but that, with Keats's aid, he finally did so. Brown was speaking from memory twenty years after the event, and in some details he was wrong. The poem was not written on four or five scraps of paper, but on two half sheets.[1] Far from being "not well legible," the manuscript is extraordinarily clearly written, and the corrections, which are few, are very easily deciphered. Even the proper arrangement of the stanzas is not hard to discover after a first moment of confusion. On the top of one of his half sheets, Keats wrote three words of what seems to have been an abandoned beginning to the poem, then he turned the sheet over and upside down, started properly with a title, and wrote straight on to the end of the page. He then took another sheet and wrote on to the end of that page, after which he went back to the verso of page one, but from the opposite end to the false beginning. He finished on the verso of page two.

Notwithstanding the fact that Brown's memory played him false in these small particulars, his tale as a whole need not be doubted. The crumpled condition of the draft, attested to by Sir Sidney Colvin,[2] is a sufficient proof of Brown's general accuracy. On this point, Sir Sidney says: "These crushings and tearings . . . are quite of a kind to confirm Brown's statement about Keats having thrust the leaves away carelessly at the back of a bookshelf." What one wonders at is why neither Brown nor Lord Houghton

[1] See facsimile of the first draft, now in the Crewe Collection, reproduced in the *Keats Memorial Volume*, compiled by Dr. George C. Williamson, 1921.

[2] *A Morning's Work in a Hampstead Garden*, by Sir Sidney Colvin, *Monthly Review*, March, 1903; reprinted in *Keats Memorial Volume*, 1921.

had access to this original draft, which was in the possession of the Reynolds family, where it remained, passing apparently from Reynolds to his sister, Mrs. Green, and from her to her sons, until, after the death of the surviving brother in 1900, it was sold at auction in 1903. Reynolds must have forgotten its existence, as he made Lord Houghton free of everything he knew himself to possess.

This has been a long digression, let us get back at once to Keats, sitting under the plum-tree in the double garden on a May morning, writing his ode.

That the full tide of his melancholy mood has abated a little, we can see by the literary and imaginative quality of the poem throughout. Sad though his mood still is, he can once more take pleasure in the act of creation. The man who conjured up the vivid midnight scene of stanzas four and five is not so miserable that he cannot enjoy the play of fancy. The very act of evoking such images brought him a momentary surcease of pain. Leigh Hunt understood this very well, perhaps it takes a poet to do so. In his review of the *Lamia* volume, published the following year, he says of this ode: "There is that mixture in it of real melancholy and imaginary relief, which poetry alone presents us in her 'charmed cup,'" and adds: "A poet finds refreshment in his imaginary wine, as other men do in their real."

The poem begins:

> "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
> My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
> Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
> One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk."

A "drowsy numbness." The first poignance of his sad mood has passed, he is weary with grief, so weary that he would fain flee it a moment if so he may. And almost immediately he does, the bird-song carries his thoughts to Summer delights and he is only too willing to have them go.

"Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!"

These things, in the mere evoking of them, bring a measure of happiness. He longs to drink of "a beaker full of the warm South," and so drinking "leave the world unseen," for even while conjuring up his lovely Summer images, because of them indeed, the thought of death haunts him. It is the old story of the *Ode on Melancholy*, the most beautiful things are by contrast the most painful. The third stanza is fraught with pain. He remembers only too well the many griefs which even his short life has known, and chief among them the constant underlying agony of Tom's death. It is the memory of poor Tom which gave him the line:

"Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies."

The last two lines of this stanza are an echo of the last half of the third stanza of the *Grecian Urn* and the first part of the last stanza of the *Ode on Melancholy*, but how differently he touches the theme here. The tone of these lines is infinitely more sensitive than that of the corresponding passages in either of the other odes. More sensitive and far more moving. This is the very intimacy of grief made manifest. There is no anger here, there is only the plain statement of unalterable and anguish-laden fact. But once more his attention is caught by the bird-song, and, listening to it, he forgets himself for a moment, only for a moment, the duration of two stanzas. The thought of death returns, he longs to "cease upon the midnight with no pain." Curiously enough, he had made use of this same expression in the sonnet of mid-March, *Why did I laugh to-night?* In the sonnet, he had said:

"Yet would I on this very midnight cease."

It was a characteristic habit with Keats to duplicate his expressions. A diligent student can find many parallels

between one poem and another. I note this here merely as an example of a rather odd custom, and because I have passed over many others in silence.

Stanza seven has been the cause of much foolish chatter. In calling the nightingale "immortal bird" and contrasting its eternity of life with individual man's short existence, any one with a spark of imaginative or poetical feeling realizes at once that Keats is not referring to the particular nightingale singing at that instant, but to the species nightingale. When Keats says:

> "The voice I hear this passing night was heard
> In ancient days by emperor and clown"

he means, of course, that the song of the nightingale was the same to the ancients as to him. I should not stoop to such a primer-like explanation, had not so eminent a scholar and poet as Dr. Robert Bridges declared the idea of this passage to be "fanciful or superficial — man being as immortal as the bird in every sense but that of sameness, which is assumed and does not satisfy."[1]

The last lines of this stanza are, I think, the most beautiful in the poem. I quote them for pure love of them, to gladden my heart and I hope those of my readers:

> "Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
> The same that oft-times hath
> Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

It is interesting to observe that in the first draft Keats wrote "fairy," and the reading "faery" was not arrived at until the publication of the poem in the *Lamia* volume. The change of the spelling entirely alters the atmosphere, bringing to it some of the weird, unearthly loveliness

[1] *John Keats. A Critical Essay*, by Robert Bridges. 1895.

which characterizes *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. Keats does not wish to suggest "fairy-land," the country of little elves dancing on fairy rings in the meadows, but the faery-land of old romance, of King Arthur and *Palmerin*.

The change from "fairy" to "faery" was a change made long after the writing of the poem. But two other corrections in the last two lines appear in the draft. Originally the "magic casements" were simply "the wide casements," and the sea was "keelless," not "perilous." Of course, we do not know whether these changes were made while Keats was still under the plum-tree, or later. Professor Lowes has pointed out to me three passages in Diodorus [1] which bear a singular likeness to a part of these last two lines. In the third chapter of Book III, there is an account of the Arabian gulf, where we are told that "by the continual dashing of the floods . . . it foams terribly." Three paragraphs after this, we read: "The waves dashing against these huge rocks, mount up in a curl, and foam to admiration." And the next sentence but one begins: "Next adjoining to this perilous sea."

So far as we know, Keats had not been reading Diodorus lately. But we really know very little about it. Keats was an omnivorous reader, and may very well have been dipping into his old love again. I should take little stock in the foaming of the waves if they were not so closely connected with the "perilous sea." "Perilous seas" is infinitely better than "keelless seas"; whether Keats owes the expression to a recollection of Diodorus or not, it was a happy chance of memory or inspiration which gave it to him. But this passage from the old historian, picturesque and excellent though it is, is plain matter of fact. There is no hint here of "magic casements" or "faery lands forlorn." There is, in short, nothing of the atmosphere of Keats's lines to be found in the old Sicilian. For that atmosphere, I think we

[1] See Vol. I, p. 425.

must turn back to *Palmerin*. In the third volume of that chronicle, it is related how the knight of the Savage Man, being taken a prisoner by an emissary of the giantess Colambar, was conveyed in a ship to the "Profound Isle." On the way, the ship ran into a storm. Textually, there is nothing in the description of this storm to join it to these lines in the *Nightingale* ode, but inferentially there is a great deal. Colambar is an enchantress, which gives the necessary atmosphere at once, and if the waves do not "foam" verbally, they certainly do by implication, as witness these passages:

> "the weather was changed suddenly with a mighty tempest... So they drove along under bare poles, rather holding their death for certain than having any hope of life."

And a few pages before:

> "on the third day the wind arose so extreme and violent, that in the midst of winter it could not be more rigorous."

Now the "Profound Isle" was close to another island, the "Perilous Isle," which had long been in the possession of another enchantress and had been bewitched until Palmerin broke the spell. Palmerin embarked for this island on a stormy day, when the waves drove against the rocks "with a roaring which was heard afar off." The island itself was very rocky, with but one harbour. On the peak of it stood "a fair palace," which is described with great accuracy and much magnificence, and although the view from it is not mentioned, "glass windows of marvellous costliness" are, and the approach to it was through a beautiful wood which may well have harboured innumerable nightingales. Some of this description is taken from much earlier in the book, but it all refers to the "Perilous Isle." I cannot help thinking that, although the exact expression "perilous seas" may be an echo of Diodorus, the whole passage, atmosphere and all, owes its existence

to the storm and the description of the palace of the sorceress Urganda in *Palmerin of England*, particularly as her successor in the magic art, the enchantress Eutropa, used the island and palace to lure wandering knights to their doom, hence the connotation of "forlorn."

The word "forlorn" brought Keats back to himself:

> "Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
> To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
> Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
> As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
> Adieu! Adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
> Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
> Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
> In the next valley-glades:
> Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
> Fled is that music: — Do I wake or sleep?"

Excellent, excellent ending! Without abating a jot of the personal implication, Keats keeps his half-real, half fantastic, atmosphere throughout. The sense of dreaming enwraps the reader with the very first line of the poem and is never once absent, the concluding lines augmenting it to the softest and vaguest of minor climaxes.

The *Ode to a Nightingale* is a marvel of poetic construction. The way Keats manages his repeated words is an extreme example of his mastery of musical effect. All through his imaginative stanzas, the tone of the opening lines of the poem sounds as an organ-point beneath what he is actually saying, and the reiteration of his original note, muffled, distant, yet perfectly clear, in the final stanza, is superb. The student of poetic architectonics can find no better primer to his hand than the three odes: the *Grecian Urn*, the *Nightingale* and *To Autumn*; and, for mere technique, a detailed examination of the variation of the whereabouts of the short line, or the lack of it, in all six odes is a liberal education. For structural, technical, musical, and thematic handling these odes are ex-

traordinarily rich in suggestion and are well worth the closest study.

It is difficult to determine, nor is it in the least necessary, whether the *Grecian Urn* or the *Nightingale* is the finer; it is enough that both together are so variously and indisputably fine. Only *To Autumn* can rank with them. They leave the other three odes of this Spring so far behind that in that fact alone is matter for much pondering on the singular inequality of Keats's production at any, and all, times throughout his life. If his artistic level rose steadily during his life, as it did, nevertheless, at any given moment, he was capable of writing poems far below the highest range of that particular moment. No poet is always at his best, but few are so consistently unequal as Keats never ceased to be.

Haydon, writing in April, 1821, to Miss Mitford[1] has a tale to tell of the *Ode to a Nightingale*. He says:

> "as we were one evening walking in the Kilburn meadows he repeated it to me, before he put it to paper, in a low, tremulous undertone which affected me extremely."

Haydon was mistaken as to Keats not having written out the poem at the time of his reciting it during the walk in the Kilburn meadows. What was probably the case was that he told Haydon he had no fair copy; and the reason for his saying this we can surmise by deduction. Haydon was the man behind the throne of a magazine called *Annals of the Fine Arts*, edited by a certain James Elmes. This Elmes was a henchman and valiant ally of Haydon's, backing him up in all his quarrels and more than eager to take his cue in everything. It seems extremely likely that when Keats repeated the *Ode to a Nightingale* to him, Haydon at once suggested the publication of the poem in the *Annals*, and that Keats replied that he should have to

[1] *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk.* With a Memoir by his son, Frederick Wordsworth Haydon.

copy it out before sending it to Elmes. He did send it to Elmes, on Monday, June fourteenth,[1] and it duly appeared in the number of the magazine for July, 1819, signed, not with Keats's name, but with a dagger. In this dagger, we see the dirty work of the reviews. Keats had no mind to send the *Ode to a Nightingale* into the world to do battle against such a prejudice as he felt the dastardly reviews had saddled him with. The poem should at least have fair play. Hence the dagger, and hence that other pseudonym, *Caviar*, which he employed later on two occasions. It is interesting to note that the word "faery" was still "fairy" when the poem was printed in the *Annals*.

The last of the poems of this so fruitful Spring was — if, as I say, my reasoning be correct — the *Ode on Indolence*. By the time he wrote it, toward the end of May, it would seem, his long orgy of writing had tired him out. His sorrowful mood had worn away to a mere wistful essence of its first energy. From the title of the ode, I suppose some little time had elapsed between it and the *Nightingale*. He wrote to Miss Jeffrey on June ninth that he had "been very idle lately," so that it must have been written some time before that date, but he has this to say of this particular ode: "You will judge of my 1819 temper when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year has been writing an ode to Indolence." We see by this that the ode was still in his mind; and there is another sentence to prove it, for Keats tells his correspondent: "I hope I am a little more of a Philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying Pet-lamb." Now in the sixth stanza of the Ode on Indolence occur these lines:

> "For I would not be dieted with praise,
> A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!"

These two identical metaphors are pretty good proof

[1] Buxton Forman dates this letter "June 12th," but apparently this is an error, as Keats told Haydon on June 17th that he had sent the poem to Elmes "on Monday," and Monday was the 14th.

that the ode was the last thing he had written, I think, but there is a more convincing one in the ode itself. Keats states the season perfectly clearly in two separate stanzas of the poem, and it is obvious that he is not inventing a fictitious time or place, as in the midnight stanzas in the *Nightingale*. This poem is absolutely autobiographical and makes no attempt to be otherwise, so that what he says of his environment may be taken as exact fact. These are the lines in question:

> ". . . Ripe was the drowsy hour;
> The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
> Benumb'd my eyes:
>
> . . . . .
>
> The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
> Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May."

The *Ode on Indolence* is merely a poetic version of his Greek Vase image of mid-March.[1] He imagines three figures, a man and two women, passing by him "like figures on a marble urn." As each approaches, it turns toward him. Three times the figures pass him, and he knows the two women to be Love and that "maiden most unmeek" his "demon Poesy"; the man is Ambition. For a moment he longs to follow them, but finds himself inert and too content to lift his head "cool-bedded in the flowery grass." He admits that he still has

> ". . . visions for the night,
> And for the day faint visions there is store";

but for the moment he can only bid the phantoms to vanish, for nothing can rouse him, his only desire is to feel nothing.

This, of course, was pure fatigue, and the poem shows it. He was well-advised to exclude it from the *Lamia* volume.

[1] See Vol. II, p. 191.

Because of the obvious duplicate of idea between the *Ode on Indolence* and the March image, it has often been supposed that Keats must have written this ode some time in February or March. Sir Sidney Colvin was the first person to assign to it its proper date of May. He suggests that the languorous mood of March had returned. It evidently had, or one very much like it only a shade more sad, and the cause was the same in the latter case as in the former — sheer weariness. The reasons for this fatigue were very much the same also, except that, in May, we have an excess of work to add to the general quota of disappointment and difficult conditions. Notwithstanding all this, there is another thing which we must take into account: the poet's natural aptitude to retain in his mind a striking figure or idea for future use. When Keats first thought of personifying Love, Ambition, and Poetry by figures on a Greek vase, he was not in a mood to make use of them. Later, having done what he knew to be a considerable amount of good work and then suffered a short and most unwelcome pause, he set about hunting for a subject which should start him off again, and found his idea of two months before still waiting to be utilized. By this time, the idea (which he had liked and thought capable of possibilities from the moment of conceiving it) had taken on a more or less definite shape. Every writer is perfectly familiar with the phenomenon of unconscious creation. Henry James, in the Preface to his novel, *The American*,[1] describes this phenomenon so accurately that I will quote his description here:

> "I was charmed with my idea, which would take, however, much working out; and precisely because it had so much to give, I think, must I have dropped it into the deep well of unconscious cerebration: not without hope, doubtless, that it might eventually emerge from that reservoir, as one had already known the buried treasure to come to

[1] *The Novels and Tales of Henry James.* New York Edition. 1907.

light, with a firm iridescent surface and a notable increase in weight."

Keats's idea, in this case, did not "come to light with a firm iridescent surface and a notable increase in weight" for the very excellent reason that he did not wait for it to come to light at all. He pulled it out of the shadowland of the unconscious because he wanted to write a poem and assure himself that the wave of creation was not spent. The result of this most unwise proceeding was a failure. *On Idolence* is much the poorest of his odes proper, as he knew very well. He may have enjoyed writing it, but I think his remarks on the subject to Miss Jeffrey smack rather more of a wilful desire to praise this feeble child of his brain than of any real belief in the quality of the ode itself, also probably he liked the main idea of the ode quite apart from its working out. Later, when it came to a question of publication, this ode, as we have seen, went into the discard.

With the *Ode on Indolence*, Keats's month of magnificent and intensive creation came to an abrupt end. The chief cause for this was that the quasi-peace which he had been enjoying was suddenly shattered to bits. This did not happen all at once; and to show the gradual advance of disagreeable circumstances, I must go back a little.

On the thirteenth of May, the long awaited letter from George arrived. The young couple had changed their plans, it seemed, and up to date had no remarkably good news to impart. The journey across country to Pittsburgh from Philadelphia, where they had landed, was a decidedly rough and unpleasant one if taken in the stage coaches of the place and period. To save his young wife the fatigue of such a trip, George had purchased a carriage and horses — a considerable expense for him — and the pair had travelled to Pittsburgh in this equipage. Arriving at Pittsburgh, they forwarded the horses to Cincinnati by land

and transferred themselves and their belongings to a keel-boat in which they floated for some six hundred miles down the Ohio River. For some reason, they stopped at Louisville, and here George changed his mind about going on to Birkbeck's settlement, deciding on someone's very poor advice to try his fortunes in a different way. Why they did not remain in Louisville, we do not know, but they did not; instead, they went on to Henderson, some hundred miles or so farther down the river. At Henderson, the young couple lodged in the same house with Audubon, the naturalist. Audubon seems to have persuaded George to buy shares in a boat which plied up and down the river with cargoes of various sorts. The boat was out on one of its trips at the time, and George appears to have invested his money without having seen it. Eventually he discovered that the boat had sunk and was a total loss. Rightly or wrongly, George Keats believed that Audubon had known that the boat was at the bottom of the river when he persuaded George to put his money into it.[1] All this information was not in the letter received on May thirteenth, only so much as declared George's intention of not going on to Birkbeck's settlement. One bit of really good news the letter did contain, George and his wife were both quite well. But if George's tidings were negative, with a leaning toward the good side, another piece of intelligence which Keats heard shortly afterwards was very much the reverse. The why of Keats's finding it out will take a little explanation.

Brown, as we already know, always let his half of Wentworth Place for the Summer. This habit of his made it imperative for Keats to look about for somewhere to spend the time of Brown's absence. There had been some idea of Keats and Brown passing the Summer in Brussels, but

[1] *The American Brother of John Keats*, by John Gilmer Speed, in *The Christian Union* for August 20, 1892. Also *Some Recollections of George Keats*, by James Freeman Clarke, in Buxton Forman's Library Edition.

the plan had been given up. As the time of Brown's departure drew near, Keats began to consider seriously what he should do. He could not face going back to his old Well Walk lodgings, the thought of Tom was too painfully insistent there. One wonders why no other lodgings at Hampstead appear to have been thought of, but nothing of the kind seems to have been considered, possibly for fear of hurting the Bentleys' feelings, who, Keats tells Miss Jeffrey, "have become friends of mine." Also his funds were at a very low ebb. By the end of May, Keats had come to see his immediate future as one of two alternatives. Either he would go as surgeon on an Indiaman, or he would retire to some cheap place in the country and continue to study and write. On the thirty-first of May, he wrote to Miss Jeffrey, asking her to inquire for a cheap lodging near Teignmouth; not in Teignmouth itself, on that point he is very clear, again, of course, on account of its connection with Tom. These alternatives he called "the choice of two poisons."

Miss Jeffrey answered promptly, strongly advising against the Indiaman, and suggesting the village of Bradley as a good place for Keats to play the studious hermit in. Keats loathed the idea of the Indiaman. It is probable that his only reason for contemplating it was to escape hiring himself out to a country or suburban practitioner, which would have entailed the detested shop. On the eighth of June, Rice went out to Hampstead to see him and propose their both going to the little village of Shanklin in the Isle of Wight. This meant sharing expenses, which was an item to Keats, and he liked Rice very much. The plan seemed a godsend and he accepted it. But before the moment to start came, things took a decided turn for the worse. By the fourteenth of June, his sore throat had come back. Of course we can instantly see how all the worry and trouble he had been undergoing would have had just this effect. His resistance was so reduced that all the

symptoms of his fatal disease were bound to be augmented forthwith. And this was not all.

Going on Wednesday, the sixteenth, to see Abbey, presumably to try and get some money for his approaching journey and stay at Shanklin, he was greeted by the miserable news that his aunt, Mrs. Midgly Jennings, dissatisfied with Abbey's administration of her mother-in-law's estate, very likely also erroneously thinking that it was in some way owing to Abbey's negligence that the original chancery suit still hung fire, had threatened to bring another suit in chancery at once. The effect of such a suit would be to tie up completely all the funds in Abbey's hands and leave Keats for an indefinite period absolutely penniless.

It is much to Keats's credit that he at once decided to seek a position with an apothecary. But here Brown stepped in. Brown, like Woodhouse, had implicit faith in Keats's genius and the certainty of his winning fame and being able to support himself if time were given him. He would not hear of the apothecary scheme. Keats must try the press again, and he must go to Shanklin with Rice and write in as much peace as this not too auspicious arrangement would allow. And Brown not only encouraged and counselled, he lent Keats money to go on with. This was generous of Brown, although one cannot help feeling that it would have been more generous to have given up the idea of renting his house and let Keats stay quietly on at Hampstead, where he had the comfort of being near Fanny Brawne. It is, of course, possible that Brown had already engaged with his Summer tenants; at any rate, whether he had or not, the idea of changing his plans does not seem to have entered into his calculations.

At this juncture, Keats asked Haydon to return some of the money which Keats had lent him. His letter told Haydon all the particulars of his situation very calmly and clearly. He did not ask for the return of the whole

loan, he merely asked for "some" money. But here Keats encountered Haydon's seamy side. Haydon's capacity for borrowing was inexhaustible, but he never paid his debts, and the debt to Keats was no exception. Keats never got back a single penny of his loan. This cut Keats to the quick, naturally. Writing to George in September, he has this to say of Haydon's behaviour:

> "he did not seem to care much about it, and let me go without my money with almost nonchalance, when he ought to have sold his drawings to supply me. I shall perhaps still be acquainted with him, but for friendship, that is at an end."

This, I think, to be in the main true. Keats eventually drifted back into some sort of a friendship with Haydon, but never into the close intimacy which had marked their early connection. He was too profoundly hurt, and Haydon had proved himself too unworthy. Bailey and Haydon, two friendships lost in a twelvemonth. A strange, pathetic, eventful twelvemonth it had been. Looking back to the previous June, Keats must have felt as though he were sojourning in another world. A very changed world indeed, for had not Abbey told him, along with the information about Mrs. Jennings, of a letter he had had from George announcing the birth of a daughter. Such an event, fortunate although Keats must have thought it in one way, was bound to increase George's difficulties considerably, and, closely bound together as the brothers were, what affected one affected both. Here was the shadow of a new responsibility for John, who had all he could cope with as it was. To add to his trials, he must now tear himself away from Fanny Brawne. It was a bitter struggle, but what else was to be done? If they were ever to marry, he must make some money, and everyone but Abbey seemed to be agreed that the best way for him to do so was by writing. It is to the honour of Fanny Brawne that she put no stumbling-

block in his way. She had much to bear during the next four months, but she never flinched. Keats knew better than his friends the quality of the girl to whom he was engaged. The day came, and Keats bade her good-bye, with what feelings can very well be imagined, and he and Rice set off for Shanklin.

## CHAPTER XI

### A TIDE AND ITS UNDERTOW

Before leaving Hampstead, Keats seems in a measure to have set his house in order. Among other things, he returned various borrowed books, as we see by an undated letter to Dilke, erroneously attributed by someone to the following year.[1] Another thing he did was to send his picture to his sister Fanny. In his last letter to her before his departure, written on June sixteenth, he says:

> "I am very sorry to think I shall not be able to come to Walthamstow. The Head Mr. Severn did of me is now too dear, but here enclosed is a very capital Profile done by Mr. Brown."

The "Head" by Mr. Severn was the miniature exhibited that year at the Royal Academy Exhibition. Severn made several copies of it, one of which was at some time given to Fanny Brawne. The "capital Profile done by Mr. Brown" was undoubtedly a silhouette. A silhouette of Keats was discovered among Severn's papers, which it has been the custom to attribute to Severn, a fact that I have always held in very grave doubt. Indeed, I have long been convinced that the author of it was Brown, but it is only within the last few months that my belief has become a certainty. During the current year (1924), the Keats Memorial Association at Hampstead received a number of relics of the poet from the descendants of Charles Brown in New Zealand. Among them was another silhouette so like the first that there can be no doubt that they were done by the same hand. This second silhouette is known to have

[1] The letter is endorsed in pencil, "1820," but this is evidently a mistake. Unfortunately Buxton Forman has followed this misleading date in his editions.

been cut by Brown, and a drawing by him, also lately discovered, which I have used as a frontispiece to the second volume of this book, shows such similarity of treatment with both silhouettes that there is no longer any room for query on the subject. I have put the two silhouettes side by side on one page in order that they may be compared. They were cut on different days, that is clear, and represent Keats in different moods. The first is the more alert; the second, the more appealing. I am inclined to think that the first was done earlier than the other, possibly before Tom's death, or, if not so soon as that, then at some time during the Winter when Keats was feeling particularly well; the second I believe to represent him just before going to Shanklin, and was probably the one sent to Fanny Keats. Silhouettes can be easily duplicated by the simple means of tracing the outline of the original picture on the white side of another sheet of silhouette paper, so that because Severn, or Fanny Keats, had a copy, is no proof that replicas may not have existed. From Brown's having carefully preserved the second silhouette, I suppose it to have been the one which he preferred. To my mind, these silhouettes are the most attractive, and the most authentic, likenesses of Keats which have come down to us. The life mask is absolutely accurate, of course, but in looking at it we have to make some allowance for the weight of the plaster on the more mobile parts of the features. The lips, for instance, give the impression of being drawn back and depressed.

It was on Sunday, June twenty-seventh, that Keats and Rice left London by the Portsmouth coach. They evidently went down by day, as Keats wrote his sister on July sixth:

> "I was on the Portsmouth Coach the Sunday before last in that heavy shower — and I may say that I went to Portsmouth by water — I got a little cold, and as it always flies to my throat I am a little out of sorts that way."

This was not the first time that Keats had been on the

rop of a coach in a rain-storm. But this time the shower seems to have caught him en route. We will hope that he had grown at least wise enough not to risk starting outside in a rain, as he had done when he went to Teignmouth the year before. The reason for the day coach is obvious; the expense was less. There were many day coaches from London to Portsmouth, but the slowest, and therefore, without doubt, the cheapest, was the "Regulator," which left the Angel Inn, St. Clement's, Strand, at eight in the morning. Keats's altered finances stand very clearly revealed by this choice of coach; hitherto he seems to have travelled either by the mail or by some crack coach. That I am right as to his going down by the most inexpensive means is shown by the fact that "some common French people but very well behaved" were among his fellow passengers. The "Regulator" deposited its travellers at the George Inn, Portsmouth, at seven o'clock in the evening. It is only some seven miles from Portsmouth to Ryde, but it is scarcely likely that the "Regulator" connected with a packet as did the Royal Mail. It was possible to procure a wherry at any hour, but it is extremely improbable that our two young men went to the expense of hiring one. No, I think they passed that night at the George and crossed over to the Isle of Wight by the first public packet the next morning. This would date their arrival at Shanklin as being on Monday, June twenty-eighth.

The chief thing in Keats's mind on reaching his destination was homesickness. He was perfectly miserable. There was no post from Shanklin, letters had to trust to carrier's carts, or some other means even more casual, for conveyance to the post town of Newport, nine miles away by road. On Tuesday night Keats wrote Fanny Brawne so agonized a letter that, the convenient carrier not being forthcoming on Wednesday, he thought better of his vehemence and tore it up. He tells the story in another letter to Miss Brawne, written on Thursday morning:

> "I am glad I had not an opportunity of sending off a Letter which I wrote for you on Tuesday night — 'Twas too much like one out of Ro[u]sseau's Heloise. I am more reasonable this morning. The morning is the only proper time for me to write to a beautiful Girl whom I love so much: for at night, when the lonely day has closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical Chamber is waiting to receive me as into a Sepulchre, then believe me my passion gets entirely the sway, then I would not have you see those R[h]apsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to, and which I have often laughed at in another, for fear you should [think me][1] either too unhappy or a little mad."

Later in the letter, he says:

> "I know not how to express my devotion to so fair a form: I want a brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair. . . But however selfish I may feel, I am sure I could never act selfishly: as I told you a day or two before I left Hampstead, I will never return to London if my Fate does not turn up Pam[2] or at least a Court-card."

He even envisages the possibility of her marrying someone else. And why not, when his own prospects seemed to put marriage on the other side of beyond? If, he tells her, he thought that she felt for him what he does for her,

> "I do not think I could restrain myself from seeing you again tomorrow for the delight of one embrace. But no — I must live upon hope and Chance."

It was a pretty awful situation truly, to have all one's hopes of the future depend upon the working of an imagination sorely hampered by untoward circumstance. And he was feeling far from well, and Rice was very poorly indeed. They were in a lovely place, to be sure:

[1] These words are missing in the original, they were interpolated by Buxton Forman.

[2] Pam is the knave of clubs in the game of loo.

> "Our window looks over house-tops and Cliffs onto the Sea, so that when the Ships sail past the Cottage chimnies you may take them for weathercocks. We have Hill and Dale, forest and Mead, and plenty of lobsters."

So he writes to his sister, bravely keeping his anxieties out of his letter.

The truth is that neither place nor companion were of Keats's choosing, and neither was suited to his state of mind or health. It is one thing to like a man and enjoy his companionship for an hour or a day, and quite another to find that same man sympathetic in the rôle of daily familiar. Rice was a thoroughly good fellow, but he was ailing himself, and contact with illness of any sort was of all things the most undesirable for Keats just then. Depressed as he was, he needed to be surrounded with cheerfulness and normality, and these were just the things which Rice could not give him. What was the matter with Rice, no one says, but he seems to have been subject to sick spells of more or less duration, and he was suffering from one of these spells at Shanklin apparently. Keats speaks of him as "Poor Rice" and admits that "his illness makes him rather a melancholy companion." Writing to Dilke a month later, when Rice had left Shanklin, Keats is more explicit. This is how he sums up the situation, then happily over:

> "Rice and I passed rather a dull time of it. I hope he will not regret coming with me. He was unwell, and I was not in very good health: and I am afraid we made each other worse by acting upon each other's spirits. We would grow as melancholy as need be. I confess I cannot bear a sick person in a House, especially alone — it weighs upon me day and night."

Rice, however, had a certain *bonhomie*; we have already seen how well he got on with the Devonshire barmaids,[1] and here at Shanklin he developed a knack of

[1] See Vol. I, p. 610.

chatting with the village people. This was a knack which Keats was conspicuously without. Apropos of this, Keats tells his sister of Rice:

> "He has a greater tact in speaking to people of the village than I have, and in those matters is a great amusement as well as a good friend to me."

Keats had come down to the Isle of Wight to work, and work he must, willy-nilly. How long he took to get at it, there is no means of telling, but by Thursday, July eighth, he was in full swing, as we see by a letter to Fanny Brawne of that date. There is much in this letter of prime importance. It shows us a great deal of Fanny Brawne's attitude, particularly her natural resentment at Keats's constant harping upon her beauty, as if that were the part of her that chiefly mattered; it shows much of the reason for Keats's failure as a lover, the reason why he suffered as he did, the misfortune of his temperament which, under the scourge of his illness, made the purely physical side of love of such vast importance to him; it shows also his belief, which was probably based on a correct diagnosis, that had it been possible for him and Miss Brawne to be married at once most of his morbid convulsions and imaginings would have faded away. I will quote the letter somewhat fully:

> "All my thoughts, my unhappiest days and nights, have I find not at all cured me of my love of Beauty, but made it so intense that I am miserable that you are not with me: or rather breathe in that dull sort of patience that cannot be called Life. I never knew before, what such a love as you have made me feel, was; I did not believe in it; my Fancy was afraid of it, lest it should burn me up. But if you will fully love me, though there may be some fire, 'twill not be more than we can bear when moistened and bedewed with Pleasures . . . Why may I not speak of your Beauty, since without that I could never have lov'd you? — I cannot conceive any beginning of such love as I have for you but Beauty. There may be a sort of love for which,

without the least sneer at it, I have the highest respect and can admire it in others: but it has not the richness, the bloom, the full form, the enchantment of love after my own heart. So let me speak of your Beauty, though to my own endangering; if you could be so cruel to me as to try elsewhere its Power. You say you are afraid I shall think you do not love me — in saying this you make me ache the more to be near you. I am at diligent use of my faculties here, I do not pass a day without sprawling some blank verse or tagging some rhymes; and here I must confess, that (since I am on that subject) I love you the more in that I believe you have liked me for my own sake and nothing else. I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a novel."

Fanny Brawne loved him for his own sake most certainly, loved him through fair weather and foul, and was even so understanding as not to be jealous of his work. And this work, this sprawled blank verse and tagged rhymes, what was it in this second week of July, 1819? This is not a little difficult to say. In a mutilated letter of July twelfth to Reynolds, Keats writes:

"You will be glad to hear, under my own hand (though Rice says we are like Sauntering Jack and Idle Joe), how diligent I have been, and am being. I have finished the Act, and in the interval of beginning the 2nd have proceeded pretty well with Lamia, finishing the 1st part, which consists of about four hundred lines."

The act here referred to has always been supposed to be the first act of *Otho the Great*, but there is a little hitch in connection with that supposition. What is puzzling about this reference is that Brown distinctly told Lord Houghton that it was at Shanklin that Keats "undertook" the writing of *Otho the Great* in collaboration with him, and the method of this collaboration as detailed by Brown (I shall quote Brown's words in a moment) makes Brown's pres-

ence at the time of writing a necessity. Now Brown does not seem to have arrived at Shanklin until later in the month. Keats first mentions him in a letter to Fanny Brawne, written on Sunday, July twenty-fifth, and this mention would seem to place his arrival as having taken place toward the end of the preceding week. Of course, Brown, in recollection, may have confused a later proceeding with an earlier. It may be that the plan of writing *Otho* had been broached before Keats left Hampstead, and the first two acts sketched out for Keats to work upon. This would seem a possible explanation of the puzzle were it not that it leaves out of account entirely the way in which the two friends worked; also there is another much more plausible one, the basis for which has only just come to light. To understand its importance, I must preface the discussion of it a little.

Reynolds, who, notwithstanding his position as a budding solicitor, had not quite given up his pen, had lately been induced to try his hand at a musical farce. This farce, which bore the singular title of *One, Two, Three, Four, Five; By Advertisement*, was written for a young actor named John Reeve whose chief asset was a marked talent for mimicry. The farce was produced at the English Opera House on July seventeenth, 1819. It enjoyed quite a success, and was popular enough to be published as one of the series of printed plays known as *Cumberland's British Theatre*. Woodhouse speaks of it to Taylor, in a letter[1] which seems to have been written in August, as follows:

> "I have just bought his "One two three four Five" and paid just that number of pence for it plus 3. It lies on my table uncut; If I had read it I would send it you: but your curiosity can keep . . . It shall go in the next parcel."

Again he writes, under the date of September seventh:[2]

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection. [2] *Ibid.*

"I also send (if Hessey forwards it, which I have injoined him to do) Reynolds's One, two 3.4.5. Such a thing must be judged of, not as a literary production, but, by your golden rule, according to the purpose of the Author . . . How triumphantly it succeeded, I told you when I went in my theatro-critical capacity to see it. There is much of Reynolds's kind of wit, half pun & half humour in it."

Now in the Woodhouse Book in the Morgan Library there is a most extraordinary fragment. It is written on all four sides of a sheet of octavo paper and is not in Keats's handwriting. I am not prepared to say in whose writing it is without more study than I have yet been able to accord it, but this is of little moment, since it seems certain that it is merely a copy. Woodhouse's statement that all the poems in his book were by Keats unless otherwise labelled leaves little room for doubt on this score; and, as a matter of fact, nothing in the volume is in Keats's hand, all the poems and fragments are copies by someone or other. This particular fragment is an excerpt from a play, and copied in a hurry. It begins in the middle of a scene, and is very difficult to read, as the characters speaking are only occasionally indicated, and there is no punctuation to speak of, and no spacing between speeches. I have given this fragment at the end of this book,[1] together with an emendated version, spaced and punctuated by me. The scene is mostly written in blank verse, but there is a little song in one place which is obviously intended to be actually sung to music. I am bound to admit that the scene does not in any way remind one of Keats, but it does very forcibly remind one of Reynolds's musical farce, and might easily have been written by Keats in an endeavour to write something pleasing to the popular taste. Reynolds's farce is in prose, occasionally dropping into blank verse, and with several interpolated songs; there is no prose in

[1] See Appendix B.

the fragment, nevertheless the construction of the scene and the included song, together with the general tenor of the whole, link the two pieces together as belonging to a *genre*. Keats had doubtless read Reynolds's farce before leaving London, and he was probably as partial to "Reynolds's kind of wit" as was Woodhouse. Scenting in *One, Two, Three, Four, Five* a popular success, it may well have occurred to him that one way of raising the wind would be to do something similar, and hence this attempt in a field quite new to him. The characters and plot of this fragment closely follow a pattern very familiar to readers of early nineteenth century farces. The scene deals with a stock situation, but the persons of the play, although again they are the quite usual *dramatis personæ* of innumerable plays of the type, have a distinct liveliness and humour, and give the fragment sufficient interest to leave us speculating on what was to come. In view of all this, I cannot help thinking that the puzzle in the letter to Reynolds finds in this fragment its answer. Probably Keats and Reynolds had talked over the likelihood of Keats's being able to follow in his friend's footsteps and produce an actable farce, hence Keats's assurance that he had done one act of it. I do not say that I have proved this to be the case; I merely say that here is an explanation which should, at least, be considered.

Keats was turning a bold face to his difficulties certainly. He had been at Shanklin just two weeks and had completed an act of something, and four hundred lines of *Lamia*. More than this, he knew what he was doing, and where it might lead and where not. He tells Reynolds:

> "I have great hopes of success, because I make use of my judgement more deliberately than I have yet done; but in case of failure with the world, I shall find my content . . . however I should like to enjoy what the competencies of life procure, I am in no wise dashed at a different prospect. I have spent too many thoughtful days and moralized

through too many nights for that, and fruitless would they be indeed, if they did not by degrees make me look upon the affairs of the world with a healthy deliberation. I have of late been moulting: not for fresh feathers and wings: they are gone, and in their stead I hope to have a pair of sublunary legs. I have altered, not from a Chrysalis into a butterfly, but the contrary; having two little loopholes, whence I may look out into the stage of the world: and that world on our coming here I almost forgot. The first time I sat down to write, I could scarcely believe in the necessity for so doing. It struck me as a great oddity. Yet the very corn which is now so beautiful, as if it had only took to ripening yesterday, is for the market; so, why should I be delicate?"

To write with the conscious intention of selling what he was writing as a chief means of support, was new to Keats, and the idea irked him a little. So much we can plainly see, but also we can notice how Keats, in a sort of wonder, found that the mature artist may cozen his muse to obey his beck and call to a considerable extent. *Otho*, his main pot-boiler, was a failure, it is true, but this was for several reasons besides the one of being written to order; while *Lamia* was a brilliant success. It must have given him a great deal of satisfaction to find himself fairly at work, started upon the enormous task of pushing away the clouds which hung over him by doing something with a direct bearing upon his destiny. Every step on the road brought him, by just so much, nearer to marriage with Fanny Brawne.

But Keats reckoned without his health. Three days more, and he was in an "irritable state of health." And the irritation, as was usual with him, led to languor. On Thursday, July fifteenth, he confessed to Fanny Brawne, who seems to have written him a consoling letter:

"You must have found out by this time I am a little given to bode ill like the raven; it is my misfortune not my

> fault; it has proceeded from the general tenor of the circumstances of my life, and rendered every event suspicious."

He tells her that when he thinks that he will not see her "the next day, or the next — it takes on the appearance of impossibility and eternity"; he gives himself a month more and then he will see her, although, he adds, "after having once more kissed you Sweet I would rather be here alone at my task than in the bustle and hateful literary chitchat."

This is not so much the utterance of a disillusioned man as that of a sick one. He was taxing his strength for all it would bear, and had no energy left for companies, or crowds, or gadding of any sort.

Sometime during the week of July nineteenth, Brown appeared at Shanklin, together with a fellow named Martin, one of that innumerable outside circle of friends whom Keats occasionally mentions. The arrival of Brown was a pleasure, but the racket of four young men in very confined quarters Keats found hard to bear. He excuses himself for not having written to Fanny Brawne "on Saturday" by saying:

> "We have had four in our small room playing at cards night and morning leaving me no undisturb'd opportunity to write. Now Rice and Martin are gone I am at liberty."

It must have been a great relief when Rice and Martin departed, leaving only Brown, whom Keats had come to regard almost as another brother. He and Brown had grown habituated to living together, and, as had happened before, Brown's splendid health and cheerful outlook on life were tonic to Keats's soul. The letter to Miss Brawne was written on Sunday, July twenty-fifth, so Rice and Martin must have left Shanklin either late on Saturday or early on Sunday morning. The immediate effect of their departure was to send Keats feverishly back to poetry. He

has, he informs Miss Brawne, "been all day employ'd in a very abstr[a]ct Poem." Whether he referred to *Lamia* or to *Hyperion*, which he may have been tinkering, we can only surmise.

To gain any accurate knowledge of Keats's inner life at this period the letters to Fanny Brawne are an indispensable study. Considerations of space alone prevent me from quoting them entire. As it is, we must do with extracts. In this letter, we find him discussing his idea of himself, which was not flattering, and we see how the very longing of his love, only so distantly certain of fulfilment, brought him up sharply against the idea of death. His absence from Fanny Brawne caused every thought connected with her to take on a tinge of morbidness. And this morbidness grew on him all that Summer, grew and grew until it nearly engulfed them both in immediate tragedy, a tragedy only averted by their finally meeting. Here is his mood on that particular Sunday evening:

> "You cannot conceive how I ache to be with you: how I would die for one hour — for what is in the world? I say you cannot conceive; it is impossible you should look with such eyes upon me as I have upon you: it cannot be . . . My dear love, I cannot believe there ever was or ever could be anything to admire in me especially as far as sight goes — I cannot be admired, I am not a thing to be admired. You are, I love you; all I can bring to you is a swooning admiration of your Beauty. I hold that place among Men which snub-nos'd brunettes with meeting eyebrows do among women — they are trash to me — unless I should find one among them with a fire in her heart like the one that burns in mine. You absorb me in spite of myself — you alone: for I look not forward with any pleasure to what is call'd being settled in the world; I tremble at domestic cares — yet for you I would meet them, though if it would leave you the happier I would rather die than do so. I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the hour of my death. O

> that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will, and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it. From no others would I take it. I am indeed astonish'd to find myself so careless of all cha[r]ms but yours — rememb[e]ring as I do the time when even a bit of ribband was a matter of interest to me."

These cannot have been altogether pleasant letters for a young girl to receive from the man to whom she was engaged. Fanny Brawne must have understood Keats very well, and loved him greatly, to have stood this sort of thing. But all she appears to have done, to judge by Keats's references to her answers, was to assure him, again and again, of his attractiveness and her continuing love. She was not well either, poor girl! But it never seems to have entered her ego-centric lover's head that the separation was a strain for her as well as for him, and that the letters he sent her were anything but soothing. This was the weak side of the affair, and the worst side of Keats which we know — his impenetrable misjudgment of Fanny Brawne. All through his correspondence with her, he tells her that he loves her, but does no single thing to prove it. He never inquires into her concerns, he never seeks to bring her pleasure. It is himself of whom he is thinking always — how their relations affect him, never how they affect her. If he could never have been selfish with her in the great things of life, he seems seldom to have been anything else in the small. Keats was an almost perfect friend, but, alas! a most imperfect lover.

Yet we must not blame him too much, particularly as regards his morbidness. He was a very sick man, leading a life which, for a consumptive, was nothing short of slow suicide. And Fanny Brawne got only the miserable residue of his vitality, after every ounce of energy he had in him had been drained into poetry. The marvel is, not that he was completely spent when his daily stint of work was

over, but that, with the exception of *Otho*, which was a forced product and should never have been attempted, the work itself showed no diminution of power, no least failure of either virility or imagination.

I think we must blame the *Gripus* fragment (I call it so from the name of the chief character) for Brown's having conceived the idea of *Otho the Great*. Undoubtedly he knew of the projected musical farce, and felt how unsuited such a thing was to Keats's genius. Undoubtedly, also, Keats showed him that one completed act when they were safely alone together after Rice and Martin had gone. Whether it were the thought of it before he joined Keats, or the perusal of the act already done, Brown seems to have been ready with an alternative plan at once. Perhaps he came down with it full-fledged in his head, perhaps it popped into his mind while Keats read *Gripus* to him, perhaps it dawned upon him as an aftermath of that event. Whenever it came to him, he had a plan, and the plan was this: He and Keats should write a poetic tragedy. He, with the experience of his one play actually presented five years before, would be responsible for the plot, the general management of scenes, in short for the purely dramatic part of the venture; Keats should supply the poetry. Here is how he described the arrangement to Lord Houghton:[1]

> "At Shanklin he undertook a difficult task; I engaged to furnish him with the title, characters, and dramatic conduct of a tragedy, and he was to enwrap it in poetry. The progress of this work was curious, for while I sat opposite to him, he caught my description of each scene entire, with the characters to be brought forward, the events, and everything to be connected with it. Thus he went on, scene after scene, never knowing nor inquiring into the scene which was to follow, until four acts were completed. It was then he required to know at once all the events

[1] Note by Lord Houghton in the Aldine edition of Keats's works, 1876; quoted in Buxton Forman's Complete Edition.

that were to occupy the fifth act; I explained them to him, but, after a patient hearing and some thought, he insisted that many incidents in it were too humorous, or, as he termed them, too melodramatic. He wrote the fifth act in accordance with his own views, and so contented was I with his poetry that at the time, and for a long time after, I thought he was in the right."

Keats must have felt himself very inept in the matter of drama to have consented to such a scheme. But truly there was a sufficient reason for his so doing, and this was just that *Otho* was, in absolute fact, a pot-boiler. He did not feel it, it had not lain dormant within him, hatching itself into a shape of meaning and beauty. It was an extraneous thing to him, a cuckoo's egg dropped into the nest of his dreams. This was not true of *Lamia*. He may have begun it just then because he felt he must be writing some poetry — *Gripus*, of course, not being a satisfying thing to do — but he had probably conceived it long before, some time during the Winter when he was reading Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. In his subconsciousness it had remained, and waxed strong, lustrous, and independent, ready to come at a call, or to fall upon him unbidden in no long time if he had not called.

Exactly when the two friends began this odd collaboration, we do not know, but they were well into it by Saturday, July thirty-first. "Brown and I are pretty well harnessed again to our dog-cart. I mean the Tragedy, which goes on sinkingly," Keats informed Dilke in a letter of that date. The "again" is disturbing. Does it mean that *Otho* had been begun at Hampstead? I do not believe so. I think this is one of the many slips to be found in Keats's letters. I believe that the "again" here simply means that he and Brown are settled down to living together as usual, and that he goes on to the tragedy without noticing the possible connection. It is apparent that Dilke knew of the tragedy; but this, Brown, who was in constant

correspondence with Dilke, may have already written about.

What an excellent companion Brown was, how full of amusing resources, how invigorating to Keats, another sentence in Keats's letter shows. As this sentence leads to a sequel, I give it as it stands:

> "The Art of Poetry is not sufficient for us, and if we get on in that as well as we do in painting, we shall by next winter crush the Reviews and the Royal Academy. Indeed, if Brown would take a little of my advice, he could not fail to be the first palet[te] of his day. But odd as it may appear, he says plainly that he cannot see any force in my plea of putting skies in the background, and leaving Indian ink out of an ash tree. The other day he was sketching Shanklin Church, and as I saw how the business was going on, I challenged him to a trial of skill — he lent me Pencil and Paper — we keep the Sketches to contend for the Prize at the Gallery. I will not say whose I think best — but really I do not think Brown's done to the top of the Art."

The sequel was long in coming, but here it is. In 1922, a grand-daughter of Charles Brown, living in New Zealand, sent to Sir Sidney Colvin a pencil sketch of Keats made by her grandfather, together with an account of its origin according to family tradition. The particulars, in Miss Brown's words, are these:

> [1] "Keats and my grandfather were out sketching together; when they came in Keats was a little tired, and he half-reclined in a couch or easy chair. My grandfather opened his portfolio and made this pencil copy. He was pleased with the result and kept it. Then it passed on to my father; after his death my mother gave it to me."

Sir Sidney presented this drawing to the National Portrait Gallery, London, where it now is. At my request, the

[1] Quoted from a paper, *A New Portrait of Keats*, by Sir Sidney Colvin, published in the *Observer* for Sunday, September 24, 1922.

directors of the Gallery most courteously sent me a photograph of the drawing, with permission to reproduce it, and this reproduction stands as the frontispiece of this volume. To me, this drawing ranks only second to the silhouettes in charm. All three attempts are so much more real, more human, than any of the other portraits of Keats, that their discovery is a godsend to those people who have found it very hard to believe that the weak and sentimental youth of Severn's and Hilton's pictures could ever have resembled the strong, masculine, and forceful fellow that Keats certainly was. The namby-pamby was too often confused with the inspirational in the minds of mediocre artists in Keats's day. Brown, with his sturdy commonsense and devotion to fact, has given us an unidealized likeness of a good-looking and interesting man, and he has given us this man under three aspects. How faithfully Brown rendered what he saw, will be realized at once on comparing the three pictures, for Keats's growing weariness, his gradually declining health, is very evident if we take them in chronological order. Indeed, it is this fact more than any other which has emboldened me to hazard the tentative chronology already suggested in the consideration of the silhouettes.[1]

Keats's fatigue, in Brown's drawing, is a commentary to his letters, and in following him through the Summer we must never forget its constant presence, and we must read everything except his poetry by the light of it. Keats was still able to throw off his inertia where poetry was concerned. Even in his letters, we can see how, when his intellect was fairly roused, or his humour sufficiently touched, he could be his normal, vital self for a space. But the lapses back are all too clear, the sense of futility too constantly waiting to pounce upon him, the difficulty of any intercourse but that of his most intimate friends too increasing a trial, for any one with the noticing eye to be mis-

[1] See Vol. II, p. 268.

led for a moment as to his real condition. Keats thought, and his friends thought, that it was the trend of events preying upon him which caused these symptoms; but, miserable as these events were, they were not the half, nor the quarter, of the trouble. Tuberculosis, and neglected tuberculosis at that, is chiefly responsible, and Keats could not have helped feeling as he did, no matter in what current of events life had chosen to place him. And yet I do not wish to over-accentuate all this. Keats was still capable of a long and lusty fight, as we are about to witness.

The debilitating climate of the Isle of Wight was beginning to tell. Keats walked about the country, but, while admitting its beauty, admitted also that it did not interest him. "I do not hesitate to say it is fine," he tells Dilke. "But I have been so many finer walks, with a back ground of lake and mountain instead of the sea, that I am not much touch'd with it, though I credit it with all the Surprise I should have felt if it had taken my cockney maidenhead." Keats thought himself blasé, surfeited with the picturesque; he was not, he was ill. Perhaps Brown agreed with him, perhaps only humoured him; at any rate, it was decided that they should go away and try somewhere else. Where, was not yet determined upon. At the end of the letter to Dilke, Keats says: "We leave this place on the 13th, and will let you know where we may be a few days after."

That was on Saturday, July thirty-first; by the following Thursday, the place had been selected. "This day week we shall move to Winchester; for I feel the want of a Library," he writes to Fanny Brawne on that day. It was time he went. His sensations, as he detailed them later, are very convincing:

> "I began to hate the very posts there — the voice of the old Lady over the way was getting a great Plague. The Fisherman's face never altered any more than our black

teapot — the [k]nob however was knocked off to my little relief."

Before taking him from Shanklin, however, I must give a few more extracts from his August fifth letter to Fanny Brawne. The first is but another illustration of mental unrest, and again we see him raking up the old question of why Miss Brawne should love him:

"Thank God for my diligence! were it not for that I should be miserable. I encourage it, and strive not to think of you — but when I have succeeded in doing so all day and as far as midnight, you return, as soon as this artificial excitement goes off, more severely from the fever I am left in. Upon my soul I cannot say what you could like me for. I do not think myself a fright any more than I do Mr. A., Mr. B., and Mr. C. — yet if I were a woman I should not like A.B.C. But enough of this. So you intend to hold me to my promise of seeing you in a short time. I shall keep it with as much sorrow as gladness: for I am not one of the Paladins of old who liv'd upon water grass and smiles for years together. What though would I not give to-night for the gratification of my eyes alone?"

A pleasant thing this, for Fanny Brawne to dwell upon. Only for a little bit of compensation immediately following, this must have been a somewhat bitter remark to digest. The palliating passage, which comes after his telling her of Winchester, is as follows:

"Brown will leave me there to pay a visit to Mr. Snook at Bedhampton: in his absence I will flit to you and back. I will stay very little while, for as I am in a train of writing now I fear to disturb it — let it have its course bad or good — in it I shall try my own strength and the public pulse. At Winchester I shall get your Letters more readily; and it being a cathedral City I shall have a pleasure always a great one to me when near a Cathedral, of reading them during the service up and down the Aisle."

The next day, Friday, he was distinctly more buoyant;

even so much so as to plan their future together, with that fine scorn of the usual and humdrum peculiar to his species and age. It is a relief to read this passage, and it must have been a relief to Fanny Brawne. It was a mercy that he wrote the two days' epistles as one letter. This is the passage in question:

> "You would delight very greatly in the walks about here; the Cliffs, woods, hills, sands, rocks, &c. about here. They are however not so fine but I shall give them a hearty good bye to exchange them for my Cathedral. — Yet again I am not so tired of Scenery as to hate Switzerland. We might spend a pleasant year at Berne or Zurich — if it should please Venus to hear my 'Beseech thee to hear us O Goddess.' And if she should hear, God forbid we should what people call, *settle* — turn into a pond, a stagnant Lethe — a vile crescent, row or buildings. Better be imprudent moveables than prudent fixtures. Open my Mouth at the Street door like the Lion's head at Venice to receive hateful cards, letters, messages. Go out and wither at tea parties; freeze at dinners; bake at dances; simmer at routs. No my love, trust yourself to me and I will find you nobler amusements, fortune favouring."

Before leaving for Winchester, Brown had gone off for a couple of days' tramp, "gadding over the country with his ancient knapsack," says Keats. It shows how rapidly writing and reading were recapturing Keats that he could end his letter to Fanny Brawne by saying:

> "Now I like his society as well as any Man's yet regretted his return — it broke in upon me like a Thunderbolt. I had got in a dream among my Books — really luxuriating in a solitude and silence you alone should have disturb'd."

It seems to have been on August twelfth, as Keats told Fanny Brawne, and not the thirteenth, as he had said to Dilke, that he and Brown finally pulled up stakes and set off for Winchester, going by way of Newport, Cowes, and

Southampton. If he stopped to consider it on his journey, Keats may very well have been not a little proud of the work accomplished during the seven and a half weeks he had been at Shanklin. Not to count the problematic act of *Gripus*, he had half finished *Lamia* and completed four acts of *Otho*.

It was hard to break into his train of thought, but Winchester was an alluring objective. It must have been a fine Summer's day for the sail across to Southampton, for Keats sent a delightful description of it to Fanny Brawne. He makes the scene extremely clear, windy and sunny, and what is more, he links it all up for us historically. Together with Keats and his great preoccupation, a preoccupation entirely apart from locality or date, is the Prince Regent, leaving Brighton for an afternoon on the water. Faint echoes of bands, visions of promenaders on esplanades, of brightly varnished barouches and curricles, of spangles, spurs, and uniforms, come to us out of Keats's little sketch. He tells it simply with no thought of suggestion, its patina is the growth of a hundred years. Here is the life which Keats never touched, but which makes so gay and tawdry a back-drop to his period:

> "One of the pleasantest things I have seen lately was at Cowes. The Regent in his Yatch (I think they spell it[1]) was anchored opposite — a beautiful vessel — and all the Yatchs and boats on the coast were passing and repassing it; and circuiting and tacking about it in every direction — I never beheld anything so silent, light, and graceful."

Reaching Winchester, apparently on Friday, August thirteenth, the friends speedily found "tolerably good and cheap Lodgings," but they did not find a library. This was disappointing, but everything else was pleasant. Keats found Winchester "an exceeding pleasant Town, enriched with a beautiful Cathedral, and surrounded by a

[1] This spelling was not infrequent in Keats's day.

fresh-looking country." This he wrote to Bailey after a two days' acquaintance with it. The next day, to Fanny Brawne, he expressed himself as perfectly satisfied: "This Winchester is a fine place . . . The little coffin of a room at Shanklin is exchanged for a large room, where I can promenade at my pleasure — looks out onto a beautiful — blank side of a house. It is strange that I should like it better than the view of the sea from our room at Shanklin." And finally, after two weeks, he was fairly in love with it; witness this, from a letter to his sister: "we like it very much: it is the pleasantest Town I ever was in, and has the most recommendations of any."

But again, Keats was there to work. He had taken the bit in his teeth, and told Brown that he would do the fifth act of *Otho* alone; and at it he went. So absorbed was he that it was hard to wrench himself away to write letters. It is therefore odd that the first letter he wrote was to Bailey, to whom he had not written for months and was never going to write to again. But that was a letter which required very little thought and no emotion at all. It was not until the sixteenth[1] that he could bring himself to write to Fanny Brawne. Poor girl, her dark days were upon her, as she must soon have discovered.

This letter was almost brutal — almost, but not quite; and yet I think ninety-nine girls out of a hundred would have considered it so. This is what Fanny Brawne received, to make of it what she could:

> "My dear Girl — what shall I say for myself? I have been here four days and not yet written you — 'tis true I have had many teasing letters of business to dismiss — and I have been in the Claws, like a serpent in an Eagle's, of the last act of our Tragedy. This is no excuse; I know it; I do not presume to offer it. I have no right either to ask a speedy answer to let me know how lenient you are — I

[1] Keats dated the letter "August 17th," but it is postmarked "AU. 16 1819." Author's Collection.

must remain some days in a Mist — I see you through a Mist: as I daresay you do me by this time. Believe in the first Letters I wrote you: I assure you I felt as I wrote — I could not write so now. The thousand images I have had pass through my brain — my uneasy spirits — my unguess'd fate — all spread as a veil between me and you. Remember I have had no idle leisure to brood over you — 'tis well perhaps I have not. I could not have endured the throng of jealousies that used to haunt me before I had plunged so deeply into imaginary interests. I would fain, as my sails are set, sail on without an interruption for a Brace of Months longer — I am in complete cue — in the fever; and shall in these four Months do an immense deal. This Page as my eye skims over it I see is excessively unloverlike and ungallant — I cannot help it — I am no officer in yawing quarters; no Parson-romeo. My mind is heaped to the full; stuff'd like a cricket ball — if I strive to fill it more it would burst. I know the generality of women would hate me for this; that I should have so unsoften'd, so hard a Mind as to forget them; forget the brightest realities for the dull imaginations of my own Brain. But I conjure you to give it a fair thinking; and ask yourself whether 'tis not better to explain my feelings to you, than write artificial Passion. — Besides, you would see through it. It would be vain to strive to deceive you. 'Tis harsh, harsh, I know it. My heart seems now made of iron — I could not write a proper answer to an invitation to Idalia. You are my Judge: my forehead is on the ground."

It appears that Miss Brawne had bridled a little at Keats's playful remark in his last letter from Shanklin that she meant to keep him to his promise of running up to town to see her, for he replies:

"You say I may do as I please — I do not think with any conscience I can; my cash resources are for the present stopp'd; I fear for some time. I spend no money, but it increases my debts. I have all my life thought very little of these matters — they seem not to belong to me. It may be a proud sentence; but by Heaven I am as entirely above

all matters of interest as the Sun is above the Earth — and though of my own money I should be careless; of my Friends' I must be spare. You see how I go on — like so many strokes of a hammer. I cannot help it — I am impell'd, driven to it. I am not happy enough for silken Phrases, and silver sentences. I can no more use soothing words to you than if I were at this moment engaged in a charge of Cavalry."

In truth, the expression was a just one. The writing of *Otho* called for much the same qualities as a charge of cavalry would have done: grit and vigour. He was writing against time, forcing himself on and on, looking neither to the right nor the left, keeping all his faculties pointed on his objective. *Lamia*, which was his own and which he wanted to do, was as much pushed aside as was Fanny Brawne. He was "engaged in a charge of cavalry," there is the answer to the letter. How necessary this concentration was to him at the moment becomes apparent at the end of the letter. He was as he was, because things were as they were. This is the final paragraph:

"Forgive me for this flint-worded Letter, and believe and see that I cannot think of you without some sort of energy — though mal à propos. Even as I leave off it seems to me that a few more moments' thought of you would uncrystallize and dissolve me. I must not give way to it — but turn to my writing again — if I fail I shall die hard. O my love, your lips are growing sweet again to my fancy — I must forget them. Ever your affectionate

KEATS."

It had to be, perhaps. Perpetual longing perpetually denied was too wracking; he felt it impossible to bear. Is it to his credit, or the reverse, that he could put the thought of Fanny Brawne away from him and immerse himself in his writing? That is a question impossible to answer without taking all the many factors of the case into due consideration. Probably the fairest judgment one can accord

him is to say that he was mercilessly selfish, but that he was also in a terrible situation, pathological in mind and body, tortured and seeking to escape torture through the opiate of work. I think, at this time, that his withdrawal from Fanny Brawne was intended to be only transient; later I believe that it became deliberate with a view to becoming final, but that we need not discuss now. Miss Brawne heard no more from him for a month, which must have been nothing short of ghastly for her. He protected himself at her expense, that is the amount of it, and the only possible excuse for him is that he acted through ignorance. That a woman could love as sharply and incisively as a man, was something he could never be made to believe, and his obstinacy caused him much suffering.

The "teasing letters of business" all harked back to George. Already, in Shanklin, he had received a letter from George begging him to see Abbey and squeeze some money out of him if possible. Keats wrote and wrote again, but Abbey was in an awkward fix and no money was forthcoming.

While all this turmoil was going on in the mind of the driven young fellow in Winchester, things, and even pleasant things, were going on about him elsewhere. Sir James Mackintosh had written to Taylor on July nineteenth: "Have you any other literary novelties in verse? I very much admire your young poet with all his singularities. Where is he? and what high design does he meditate?" This is a little thing, but Sir James Mackintosh was a man of considerable force and position. This next is a little thing too, but how great a devotion it shows. Toward the end of August, Taylor went to Retford in Nottinghamshire on a visit to his father. Before going, he asked Woodhouse to send him a copy of the *Pot of Basil* so that he might read it to his family. In an undated letter [1]

[1] Unpublished letter from Woodhouse to Taylor. Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

to him, Woodhouse voices their joint opinion of the poem:

> "I bethought me on Saturday of my promise about *Isabella*, and took the earliest opportunity . . . of enquiring whether you had left out the Book in which she was to be copied: but without the least idea that you had done so. However, William found it, and I have copied the Basil pot in it & given it . . . to Hessey along with this letter to forward to you . . . Recollect that this is the 4th time I have written it over, recollect also that I could say it by heart with about 5 promptings; and if, as really was the case, I went through it with more pleasure than ever, one of two conclusions is inevitable: either that it is a noble poem, or that my judgement is not worth the tythe of a fig. And I am quite content to be set down for a dolt in the opinion of that man who should deny the first of the above alternatives. May those to whom you show the poem derive as much gratification from it as I did."

Meantime *Otho the Great* marched on to a conclusion. We have no more letters for a week, and by that time the play was finished.

*Otho* is, after all, a hybrid performance. It would have been impossible for any man to write a play of unity, balance, and psychological interest, when he had no idea of its general trend to start with, and no clear conception of the characters, whose actions throughout came upon him piecemeal. If Keats had not been so impressed with the idea that he must make money, if Brown had not been so convinced that the stage was his friend's surest means of doing so, if Keats had not been so docile nor Brown so self-confident, *Otho* would never have been begun. As it is, the tragedy was time wasted. The precious weeks spent in grinding it out might have given us another story as good as *Lamia* or the fragment of the *Eve of St. Mark*, indeed, the nonfinishing of the latter tale is one of the greatest misfortunes of Keats's life.

Taken from every point of view, *Otho* is a failure. It is dull beyond belief, it is unnatural, perfervid, and weak. The verse is of the type which any capable rhymester can turn out by the yard. Not once in the whole play is there a turn of phrase, a trick of expression, a flash of genius, to remind us that the tragedy is by Keats. It is hack work of the most glaring variety. Nearly every page is marred by verbal echoes from some poet or other; even the plot is pieced together from this or that familiar play, although as, until the fifth act, Brown was responsible for this part of the production, that need not concern us here. For all these tides of reminiscence, I must refer my readers to other books;[1] it is enough to note their existence in this. The fifth act is more dramatic than the rest of the play. Ludolph's insanity, although over-hysterical and chattering in its portrayal, occasionally touches upon a human emotion, some slight suggestion of pathos, a little genuine feeling. Possibly Kean, for whom Keats designed the play, could have made Ludolph convincing in this last act; but even Kean would have been taxed to his utmost to keep any audience interested during the first four. To be sure, audiences in Keats's day put up with a good deal of this sort of stuff. To a modern reader, *Otho* is inconceivably dreary and stupid, and the best comment on its acting qualities may be found in the fact that it has never been presented on any stage. Its history, so far as Keats and Brown were concerned, was one long disappointment, but the disappointment did not fall upon them all at once, as we shall see. Keats could not believe that what he had worked so hard at was really extremely poor. For once he was deceived as to the quality of one of his own things. He, and we may suppose some of his friends also, believed what

[1] The principal books in which these parallels may be traced are *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt, Fourth Edition; and the unpublished thesis: *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney, in the Widener Library, Harvard University.

they wished to believe, and it was a long time before the poverty of the work was borne in upon them. Severn, for one, believed in the play till the end of the chapter, which was loyal, but not perspicacious.

At this point, I am enabled, through a concatenation of circumstances, to give several hitherto unpublished letters which throw much light on Keats's doings and thoughts during the end of August and the early weeks of September. From letters of Keats, Woodhouse, Taylor, and Brown, all taken in conjunction, we gain a very vivid picture of these weeks. I make no scruple, therefore, of quoting from this correspondence at some length.

The first letter is from Keats. It was published (probably from a copy) in a mutilated condition by Buxton Forman. As so much was left out in his version, I give the letter[1] entire:

"Winchester Monday morn
24 Aug^st[2]

My dear Taylor

You will perceive that I do not write you till I am forced by necessity: that I am sorry for. You must forgive me for entering abruptly on the subject, merely prefixing an entreaty that you will not consider my business manner of wording and proceeding any distrust of, or standing against you; but put it to the account of a desire of order and regularity. I have been rather unfortunate lately in money concerns — from a threatened chancery suit. I was deprived at once of all recourse to my Guardian. I relied a little on some of my debts being paid — which are of a tolerable amount — but I have not had one pound refunded. For these three months Brown has advanced me money: he is not at all flush and I am anxious to get some elsewhere. We have together been engaged (this I should wish to remain secret) in a Tragedy which I have just finish'd; and from which we hope to share moderate Profits. Being thus far connected, Brown proposed to me,

[1] Author's Collection.
[2] Monday was August 23rd. Keats seldom knew the day of the month.

to stand with me responsible for any money you may advance to me to drive through the summer. I must observe again that it is not from want of reliance on you[r] readiness to assist me that I offer a Bill; but as a relief to myself from a too lax sensation of Life — which ought to be responsible which requires chains for its own sake — duties to fulfil with the more earnestness the less strictly they are imposed. Were I completely without hope — it might be different — but am I not right to rejoice in the idea of not being Burthensome to my friends? I feel every confidence that if I choose I may be a popular writer; that I never will be; but for all that I will get a livelihood. I equally dislike the favour of the public with the love of a woman — they are both a cloying treacle to the wings of independence. I shall ever consider them (People) as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration — which I can do without. I have of late been indulging my spleen by composing a preface *at* them: after all resolving never to write a preface at all. 'There are so many verses,' would I have said to them, give me so much means to buy pleasure with as a relief to my hours of labour. You will observe at the end of this if you put down the Letter 'How a solitary life engenders pride and egotism!' True: I know it does — but this Pride and egotism will enable me to write finer things than anything else could — so I will indulge it. Just so much as I am humbled by the genius above my grasp, am I exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world. A Drummer boy who holds out his hand familiarly to a field marshal — that Drummer boy with me is the good word and favour of the public. Who would wish to be among the commonplace crowd of the little-famous — who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves? is this worth louting or playing the hypocrite for? To beg suffrages for a seat on the benches of a myriad-aristocracy of Letters? This is not wise — I am not a wise man. Tis Pride. I will give you a definition of a proud Man. He is a Man who has neither vanity nor wisdom — one fill'd with hatreds cannot be vain — neither can he be wise. Pardon me for hammering instead of

writing. Remember me to Woodhouse, Hessey and all in Percy street.

Ever yours sincerely
JOHN KEATS.

P.S. I have read what Brown has said on the other side — He agrees with me that this manner of proceeding might appear too harsh, distant and indelicate with you. This however will place all in a clear light. Had I to borrow money of Brown and were in your house, I should request the use of your name in the same manner."

The "doublings" of this letter are taken up with a note to Taylor from Brown, as follows:

"DEAR SIR,

Keats has told me the purport of this letter. Had it been in my power to have prevented this application to you, I would have done so. What property I have is locked up, sending me quarterly & half yearly driblets, insufficient for the support of both of us. I am fully acquainted with his circumstances, — the monies owing to him amount to £230, — the chancery suit will not I think eventually be injurious to him, — and his perseverance in the employment of his talents, — will, in my opinion, in a short time, place him in a situation more pleasant to his feelings as far as his pocket is concerned. Yet, for all this, I am aware, a man of business should have every security in his power, and Keats especially would be uncomfortable at borrowing unless he gave all *in his power*: besides his own name to a Bill he has now to offer but mine, which I readily agree to, and (speaking in a business-like way) consider I possess ample security for doing so. It is therefore to be considered as a matter of right on your part to demand my name in conjunction with his; and if you should be inclined to judge otherwise, still it would be painful to him not to give you a double security when he can do so, & painful to me to have it withheld when it ought to be given.

Yours sincerely,
CHAS BROWN."

Keats, as we have noticed before,[1] was not skilful in the composition of begging letters. It was one thing to ask the return of a loan, but quite another to approach someone on whom he had no possible claim. It hurt his pride to do it, and with the worst possible taste he allowed his pride to grow mile high, because of its very injury, until it quite over-topped whatever other sentiments the letter contained. Taylor was not in Fleet Street when this remarkable epistle arrived, he was at his father's at Retford, so the letter was forwarded. This occasioned some delay, and his subsequent correspondence with Woodhouse on the subject caused more. Meanwhile Keats, having posted his request, sat down to wait, with what composure he could muster.

On Wednesday, August twenty-fifth, he wrote to Reynolds in much the same strain that he had written to Taylor. He declares himself convinced of his power to become a popular writer, but with a fine gesture refuses "the poisonous suffrage of a public." But to Reynolds he can expand, and he does. After suggesting to Reynolds that Rice, to whom he has just written,[2] will tell Reynolds all about the removal from Shanklin, and how he, Keats, likes Winchester, he continues: "I have indeed scarcely anything else to say . . . except I was to give you a history of sensations, and day-nightmares." He is willing to go so far as to announce:

> "my thoughts and feelings which are of the selfish nature, home speculations, every day continue to make me more iron — I am convinced more and more, every day, that fine writing is, next to fine doing, the top thing in the world; the Paradise Lost becomes a greater wonder."

Keats is both encouraged and as blue as indigo, and these two sensations are simultaneous, or so nearly so that I doubt if he himself could disentangle them. The last

[1] See Vol. I, p. 464. [2] This letter appears to be lost.

half of the letter is taken up with this pathetic bit of self-revelation:

> "The soul is a world of itself, and has enough to do in its own home. Those whom I know already, and who have grown as it were a part of myself, I could not do without: but for the rest of mankind, they are as much a dream to me as Milton's Hierarchies. I think if I had a free and healthy and lasting organization of heart, and lungs as strong as an ox's, so as to be able to bear unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation without weariness, I could pass my life very nearly alone though it should last eighty years. But I feel my body too weak to support me to the height, I am obliged continually to check myself, and be nothing. It would be vain for me to endeavour after a more reasonable manner of writing to you. I have nothing to speak of but myself, and what can I say but what I feel? If you should have any reason to regret this state of excitement in me, I will turn the tide of your feelings in the right Channel, by mentioning that it is the only state for the best sort of Poetry — that is all I care for, all I live for. Forgive me for not filling up the whole sheet; Letters become so irksome to me, that the next time I leave London I shall petition them all to be spared me. To give me credit for constancy, and at the same time waive letter writing will be the highest indulgence I can think of."

What a different man is this from the gregarious young fellow of two and a half years before, of Hunt's parlour and Haydon's studio! That he felt himself to be ill, is quite evident, and that he found absence from Fanny Brawne such a strain that his only way of combating it was to try and smother the thought of her by any means in his power. Keats's diagnosis of his mental state was wrong, so much we can be very sure from his comparative peace and happiness in April and May when he and Miss Brawne were seeing each other daily. In remembrance, this seemed a time of aroused desires constantly thwarted, and as such he feared not only to face it, but to think of it.

But retrospective memories are liable to strange distortions. As he had lived those months, they had given him much besides misery. Now he had forgotten, and was almost consciously pushing himself into the conviction that poetry was enough for him, which, as the sequel shows, it most emphatically was not. He was self-deceived in perfect good faith, it is true, but a poor dupe nevertheless, and an immolated victim of symptoms which neither he nor any one else had the wit to assign to their real cause.

To add its quota to the cloudy outlook, he and Brown heard a rumour that Kean was to go to America for the Winter. If so, what would happen to the tragedy? This news descended upon them just as Brown was copying *Otho* "in a superb style — better than it deserves." "I had hoped to give Kean another opportunity to shine," he tells his sister with wry humour. "What can we do now? There is not another actor of Tragedy in all London or Europe. The Covent Garden Company is execrable." There was nothing to do, so far as the tragedy went, but for Brown to continue to copy it; and nothing for Keats to do but set himself to work on *Lamia*, and saunter round Winchester in "the delightful Weather we have had for two Months." As for his walks, "a Mile a day" was, he declared "quite sufficient," still he regretted not having "been well enough to bathe though I have been two Months by the sea and live now close to delicious bathing." Yes, there was one other thing he could do, which was to count his ebbing store of shillings and pence every day and wonder why on earth Taylor did not answer.

The reason for Taylor's silence was that he could not make up his mind just what course to take. He did not like the tone of Keats's letter — it would have been miraculous if he had — and he feared to make a hasty decision. Knowing himself of a much less understanding and conciliatory temper than his friend Woodhouse, and realizing Woodhouse's deep sympathy with Keats, Taylor, who must have

been an unusually temperate and just man, sent the questionable letter to Woodhouse and asked his opinion. Taylor's letter has not come to light, but Woodhouse's reply[1] to it has. I quote those parts of it which refer to Keats. It is dated: "Temple, Tuesday Evg. 31, Augt 1819."

> "Though I have let a post elapse, I apprehend this letter, which will go in a parcel to you, will reach you as soon as Keats's answer. I have read his Letter; and I did it before I had read yours, and with my usual disposition to understand his terms in that sense in which he uses them. Now I apprehend his word Pride to mean nothing more than literary Pride, — that disposition which arises out of a Consciousness of superior & improving poetical Powers, & which would keep him, even in his present state of comparative imperfectness, from writing so as to minister to the depraved taste of the age. It is not in my opinion personal pride, but literary pride which his letter shews; — That he has some of the former also, I believe; But his letter does not evince it, further than as it displays a solitary spirit. The Pride contained in his letter, as I understand it, is a noble pride, akin to that Indication which Milton pours forth in language of such "solemn tenour & deep organ tone" at the beginning of his 2d book on "the reason of Ch. Government." and for which I honor him. And I am not quite certain whether your Post Script was not added in consequence of a new ray of light breaking in upon you on this subject. Is he wrong to be dissatisfied with the Prospect of a mere 'Seat on the Bench of a myriad-aristocracy in Letters'? or to keep aloof from them and their works, — or to dislike the favor of such a 'public,' as bepraises the Crabbes, & the Barretts, & the Codruses of the day. I wonder how he came to stumble upon that deep truth that 'people are debtors to him for his verses & not he to them for admiration.' Methinks such a conviction on any one's mind is enough to make half a Milton of him.
>
> I agree with you in every syllable you say about Pride. But I do not think it applies to Keats, as he shews himself

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

in his letter. And if you were to cull out a person upon whom to fit your summary of the whole (neither self praise nor man's praise can turn the scale either way, — nor can unmerited neglect or censure weight a feather) I think, as far as Poetry is concerned, that very man would be Keats as evidenced in his letter.

Having complied with your wish of telling you what I thought of his letter, I come now to his request. I doubt whether he will want so much as you mention. I apprehend 50£ or 60£ would suffice him, but this his next letter will shew. I think I mentioned to you how I was situated as to Cash, that I had scrapéd all I could together, to pay my Father, whose two calls lately had run him close. That I expected nothing till winter, and had made my calculation upon wanting little till that time. Under these circumstances I could not command £100. But I can spare £50. which shall be at your disposal, at what time & place you think proper. You are well acquainted with my good wishes towards Keats, as well as with their complete disinterestedness. Whatever People regret that they could not do for Shakespeare or Chatterton, because he did not live in their time, that I would embody into a Rational principle; and (with due regard to certain expediences) do for Keats. But one's means are not unlimited, and one would not wish to give rise to expectations, which should end in disappointment, nor would one like to have the oats eaten by other cattle. I wish he could be cured of the vice of lending — for in a poor man, it is a vice.

I think with you about the offer of Brown's name, and about the nonsense of the note. But would it be or not beneficial to K. that it should be taken? And is any part of the money to go to Brown? The sum will perhaps enable you to judge.

Hessey spoke about Keats's letter, & wants, & quoted your intimation to him, so that I could not do less than say he should see the letter. He will not 'peach' about the Tragedy, and there is no other secret in it. I think to shew him your letter too. Perhaps he may think with me, and contrary to you, that the obligation to K. may prove beneficial to 'the business.'

I can say nothing about what is best to be done, for K. I am tempest tost on the subject, and even with the light of his next letter I may be as much in the dark. I think (and you need not make a bow for the compliment) that you are the prudenter man of the two, to judge in this case. But take this with you. 1st I really can't spare more 'as in presenti,' than the sum I have named. And 2d my friendship for the poor fellow wod willingly go, if need is, greater lengths than merely lending you money to lend him.

I shall be out of town in about 10 days, but I can send you (or Hessey) a draft from any place . . .

I like Brown's few lines much."

At the end of the letter, Woodhouse says:

"Reynolds is off, but before he went he called and left me the Sonnet — and a letter he had received from Keats. I send it to you: It will be a Comment on parts of his to you."

The sonnet cannot be traced, it may not have been by Keats at all; the letter to Reynolds is most certainly the one from which I have just quoted.

It appears from this letter as though Woodhouse thought that Taylor had written something to Keats without waiting for his, Woodhouse's, reply, but Taylor seems to have been too cautious for that. Keats waited for over a week and no answer came. No answer came from any of the letters he had written, even the *Examiner* ceased to arrive, and he and Brown relied on that for information about Kean's plans. By Tuesday, August thirty-first,[1] he could stand it no longer and wrote to Taylor again.

This letter is also mutilated in the Buxton Forman editions, and even in the unmutilated part is incorrect, but as these textual inaccuracies are slight, I will quote only the last part of the letter, most of which is published for the first time. I copy from the letter[2] itself:

[1] Keats dated the letter "Sept. 1, 1819," but there are two postmarks on it, one "AU. 31, 1819," the other "SE. 1, 1819."

[2] Author's Collection.

"Why I should come on you with all these complaints, I cannot explain to myself: especially as I suspect you must be in the Country. Do answer me soon for I really must know something. I must steer myself by the rudder of Information. And I am in want of a Month's cash — now believe me I do not apply to you as if I thought you had a gold Mine: no — I understand these matters well enough now having become well acquainted with the disbursements every Man is tempted to make beyond his means. From this time I have resolved myself to refuse all such requests: tell me you are not flush and I shall thank you heartily. That is a duty you owe to yourself as well as to *me* I have mulcted Brown to[o] much: let it be my last sin of the kind. I will try what use it will be to insist on my debts being paid."

Before Taylor had a chance to receive this, he had acted by writing to Woodhouse that he thought fifty pounds might be appropriated to Keats, but only thirty sent him, and by writing to Keats to expect a remittance. Woodhouse is our informant about the transaction, for he wrote to Taylor on Tuesday, the seventh, as follows:

[1] "I was favoured with your last on Saturday, & saw off a Bk.p. Bill for 30£ to Keats. Hessey holds the rest at his disposal. The funds of this Beaumont & Fletcher pair . . . were at a low, — verily at a silver, ebb. But, with your supply, there came an announcement that some Cash had gone to *Chichester*, by mistake, in payment of one of the Debts due to K. so that he was quite flush."

It was certainly generous of Woodhouse to call it "your supply" to Taylor, when it was his own money all the time. Woodhouse's delicacy in realizing that it would be easier for Keats to accept a loan from his publishers than from him was admirable. One likes Woodhouse more and more the better one knows him. And his generosity did not stop here, he made plans. Later in this letter, he says:

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

"If my plans for the Summer were not laid past alteration; I wod go upon a poetical spree: into France to pick up bits of Provençal & old Poetry etc. Or wod it not be better to 'miser it' till next Summer so as to afford to take J.K. with me — and should you like to trust your personage with us? But we have plenty of time to think of it."

Time! Time! There was no time, already it was too late. But what a pity that circumstances might not have given Keats this spree and with these men.

The letter from which Woodhouse got the information which he handed on to Taylor was one written by Keats to Hessey.[1] It has never been printed, so I give it in full.

"Winchester, Sunday Sept. 5th.

My dear Hessey,

I received this morning yours of yesterday enclosing a 30£ bank post bill. I have been in fear of the Winchester Jail for some time: neither Brown nor myself could get an answer from any one. This morning I hear that some unknown part of a Sum due, to me and for which I had been waiting three weeks has been sent to Chichester by mistake. Brown has borrow'd money of a friend of his in Hampshire. A few days ago we had a few shillings left — and now between us we have 60£ besides what is waiting in the Chichester post office. To be a complete Midas I suppose some one will send me a pair of asses ears by the waggon. There has been such an embargo laid on our correspondence that I can scarcely believe your letter was only dated yesterday. It seems miraculous.

Ever yours sincerely,

John Keats

I am sorry to hear such a bad account of himself from Taylor."

The man who had sent the money to Chichester was Haslam, who was paying back part of a sum formerly borrowed of George.

[1] Author's Collection.

On this same Sunday, Keats wrote again, in duty bound, to Taylor. The information that Taylor was far from well, set Keats off upon a dissertation which might almost be called medical. The man who could so interest himself in a scientific subject might surely have turned his attention to science if other things had not claimed him even more imperiously. In dealing with Keats, one must always remember that, with him, it was never other things less, but simply poetry more. If legend were all we had to test his quality, this fact alone would prove him among the major poets. Because this passage is important as an illustration of one side of his nature, his mind, I quote a part of it here:

> [1]"You will find the country air do more for you than you expect. But it must be proper country air . . . You should live in a dry, gravelly, barren, elevated country open to the currents of air, and such a place is generally furnished with the finest springs. The neighbourhood of a rich inclosed fulsome arable Land especially in a valley and almost as bad on a flat, would be almost as bad as the smoke of fleet street. Such a place as this was shanklin only open to the south east and surrounded by hills in every other direction. From this south east came the damps from the sea which having no egress the air would for days together take on an unhealthy idiosyncrasy altogether enervating and weakening as a city Smoke — I felt it very much. Since I have been at Winchester I have been improving in health — it is not so confined — and there is on one side of the city a dry chalky down where the air is worth sixpence a pint. So if you do not get better at Retford do not impute it to your own weakness before you have well considered the nature of the air and soil."

This leads on to a consideration of the effects of agriculture on character, in which, however, we will not follow him. A little later, he thanks Taylor for coming to his aid, and has the grace to say: "Had I known of your illness

[1] Corrected from the original letter. Author's Collection.

I should not have written in such fiery phrase in my first letter." One sentence at the end of this letter is arresting, he has been speaking of *Otho* which he hopes Taylor "will not think labour misspent," and adds:

> "Since I finish'd it I have finish'd Lamia: and am now occupied in revising St. Agnes' Eve... I will cross the letter with some lines from Lamia."

*Lamia* is commonly spoken of as having been written at the same time as *Otho*, dove-tailing in with it, as it were. But a careful study of the letters makes it evident that this was not the case. Part I of *Lamia* was finished before Brown's arrival at Shanklin, and from the moment of the starting upon *Otho* Keats devoted himself entirely to the tragedy until it was done, only after that returning to his neglected poem. But he returned to it with such zest as to accomplish the three hundred odd lines of Part II in short order.

About one thing we must make no mistake; *Lamia* was certainly planned, or, at least, registered as a possible subject for a narrative poem, before Keats left Hampstead. He had even talked about it with Reynolds, as is proved by his mention of it in his letter from Shanklin as something which Reynolds had already heard of. Realizing this, we need not be surprised that the form of the poem is somewhat different from anything he had attempted before; it came as the tag end of his experimental orgy, and was conceived as another experiment. In this instance, the experiment was one of form. Keats was not striking out any new paths, he was merely permitting himself a stroll on someone else's property where he had not happened to wander before. Brown told Lord Houghton that Keats wrote *Lamia* "with great care after much study of Dryden's versification." Commenting on this, Professor de Sélincourt has written: [1] "The versification is closely modelled

[1] *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt.

upon the *Fables* of Dryden, from which Keats learnt how to relate his metre with his sentence structure and to use both the triplet and the Alexandrine with striking success." Professor de Sélincourt's "striking success" is, I think, a little too strong. Keats sometimes employs these devices happily, but at other times his use of them is decidedly clumsy. The effect of a triplet, or an alexandrine, breaking into a block of heroic couplets is to bring a sense of pause, even amounting sometimes to a definite feeling of finality, to the passage so treated. To use either of these devices when no such effect is intended, mars the consecutive flow of the passage in which they appear and injures its rhythm. Too often in *Lamia* we find Keats committing this blunder. This is due to his inexpertness in handling a very valuable rhythmical contrivance with which he is not yet quite familiar. *Lamia* is a tempting study to the technician, but I must not let myself be beguiled into anything of the sort here. There are other, more important, aspects of the poem to consider just now.

The source of *Lamia*, we know. Keats wrote it at the end of the first page of his fair copy of the poem, which is still in existence.[1] He ran across the story in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and, strangely enough, it is one of the only two stories throughout that work which lend themselves to poetical treatment. Having stumbled on his plot, Keats found it enormously to his liking in the temper he was in. It deals with the crushing effect of reality when brought into conflict with dream. What if *Lamia* were an enchantress, what if her true form were that of a snake, what if her gifts were illusion, is it not better to dwell in ignorance and illusion, if these things bring happiness, than to see by the cold, cruel, stark light of truth? We need not scoff at the question, for is it not, after all, rather difficult to answer? Remember Keats's Paolo and Francesca dream, and how he had longed to dream it every night;

[1] Bemis Collection.

remember the soothing vision which the nightingale's song had brought him. He was encompassed by dangers and difficulties in his waking life, but dreaming was his heritage; should he, must he, eschew it, must he play the scornful, keen-eyed philosopher to his own imaginative joys? He solves nothing in his tale, unless the fact that Lycius dies is a solution. But even here the question persists, for is the death of Lycius due to the fact that he has discovered Lamia's true status, or simply the result of her being torn from him? Keats has no answer to give, the puzzle is as much his as his readers'.

I have dealt with the substratum of the poem first, but we must not forget the superstructure. On the surface, *Lamia* is a story, a very captivating and excellent story. And it is a story of Greece, that charming Elizabethan conception of Greece which always enchanted Keats. With Dryden as a distantly related godfather to his undertaking, Keats boldly steps into his tale. The speed with which he narrates it is something new to him. It owes much of its success to its briefness and swiftness, and even its odd lapses back into the sentimentality of his early work, regrettable though these are, cannot take away from the firmness and solidity which is a marked effect of the directness of the whole.

*Lamia* is by no means such a marvel of homogeneous treatment as the *Eve of St. Agnes*; it is no such perfection of evocative reticence as the fragment of the *Eve of St. Mark*. It stands midway in his stories, and seems to tie his younger and his older selves together by including within it bits of both. It speaks volumes for the excellent poetry of a great deal of it, and the dramatic quality of the whole, that, in spite of the lapses of which I have spoken, the interest in it never even so much as wavers throughout. Certain lines of the poem are in Keats's best and most original vein. For instance, when *Lamia* arrives near Corinth:

"... There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood."

Or this, when he is speaking of the city:

"As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers."

Or the mention of the passers-by in the streets, who

"Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white."

Keats knew the excellent effect of his "shuffled"; he employed it again in the *Eve of St. Mark*.

Nowhere has Keats used his extraordinary sense of colour with more skill than in *Lamia*. What could be better than this description of the serpent?

"She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries —
So rain-bow sided, touch'd with miseries,
. . . . .
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar."

Here is another passage, where the reflection of a bright light in polished marble is exactly evoked by one miraculous epithet:

"A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
Mild as a star in water."

For the mingling of line with colour, as well as an illustration of Keats's keen sense of proportion, the description of the banqueting-hall is exceptionally fine even when we compare it to his other work of the sort. It should be read first for pleasure, but afterwards with an eye for these qualities, since the passage reveals its full beauty only when we take note of them.

As a postscript to this Sunday letter to Taylor, Keats wrote: "Brown is going to Chister and Bedhampton a visiting. I shall be alone here for three weeks." It was probably on Monday or Tuesday that Brown started off on what purported to be a visit to old Mr. Dilke and the Snooks. He did go to both these places, but he went somewhere else too, and of this somewhere he told Keats nothing, indeed there is every reason to believe that he never told him. It was during this three weeks that he went over to Ireland and contracted the illegal marriage with Abigail Donohue.[1] Why Brown did not confide in Keats is obvious; Keats was an unusually honourable man, and he would never have countenanced Brown's dastardly behaviour. He would either have made Brown marry the woman in earnest or have broken with him for good; he had broken with Bailey for far less. What a blow like this would have meant to Keats at this juncture, it is horrible to think; and yet to know him so much cheated in the quality of his friend is very unpleasant also. Brown's other friends, who learnt of this episode in his life much later, after Keats's death, forgave him; perhaps there were extenuating circumstances in the character of the woman and Brown's ethical tenets. Still it is hard to look with a kindly eye on his cowardice in regard to Keats, who was always so open with him.

On the Friday after writing to Taylor, Keats received an alarming letter from George. It contained the dire news that George's worst fears were realized, the boat had been

[1] See Vol. I, p. 471. From an Unpublished Memoir by his son, C. A. Brown. Day Collection.

traced to the bottom of the Ohio River and all the money which George had taken away with him was definitely gone. A certain Mr. Bakewell, a Louisville acquaintance, had lent him money for temporary needs, but his financial affairs would be a total wreck if his share of Tom's portion of their joint patrimony could not be got out of Abbey somehow. With characteristic energy, Keats promptly determined to have no more to do with letters, but to go up to town at once and have an interview with Abbey. He left Winchester at nine o'clock that same evening, and was duly landed at the Bell and Crown Inn, Holborn, at nine o'clock on Saturday morning, September eleventh. I admit that I have arrived at these hours from deduction chiefly. There were only two night coaches from Southampton in 1819, and one was the mail. If Keats took the mail, he would have had to pay more than if he went by the other coach, also he says: "I came by the Friday night coach," not the "Friday night mail." It makes very little odds which conveyance he went by. Both ran to the same London inn, the only difference was that the mail left Winchester an hour later than the night coach, and arrived at the Bell and Crown two hours earlier.

Keats, suddenly pulled out of the studious solitude of Winchester, found that "London appeared a very odd place." He said afterwards that it took him a whole day before he could "feel among men." His first act was to write to Abbey and ask for an interview. Abbey was quite decent about this and invited him to "drink tea" and discuss business at seven o'clock on the following Monday. Here then were two whole days and a part of a third to be got through somehow. It might be thought that he would have betaken himself at once to the Brawnes' in Hampstead, but this was just what he did not do. Why, we shall see in a moment. Instead, he cast round in his mind which of his friends he should look up, and discovered that "there was not one house" he "felt any pleasure to call at." Reynolds

had gone to Devonshire, the Dilkes were away in the country, Taylor was at Retford. He "walked about the streets as in a strange land." Rice was the only one at home, and with him he passed some time. The melancholy sojourn together at Shanklin had by no means dampened Keats's affectionate interest in Rice; on the contrary, Rice was still "the most sensible and even wise man I know," and of him he could still say with sober warmth: "We are great friends, and there is no one I like to pass a day with better." While Keats was at Rice's, Martin dropped in to say good-bye before going to Dublin, and the three cracked jokes together and recalled the Shanklin days which all three had shared. Keats saw Haslam too, but found him "very much occupied with love and business." He showed Keats a picture (presumably a miniature) of his inamorata by Severn, which Keats did not take to. His opinion of the young lady, as the picture discovered her, he expressed in this pregnant phrase: "I think she is though not very cunning, too cunning for him." Keats was in no mood to be sympathetic with lovers. A few days later he wrote to George:

> "A man in love I do think cuts the sorriest figure in the world; queer, when I know a poor fool to be really in pain about it, I could burst out laughing in his face . . . Not that I take Haslam as a pattern for lovers; he is a very worthy man and a good friend. His love is very amusing."

Among other doings of this Saturday, Keats dropped in at 93 Fleet Street, Taylor and Hessey's shop, where he saw Woodhouse, who invited him to breakfast with him the next day at his chambers in the Temple. On Sunday then, Keats breakfasted with Woodhouse and stayed with him all the morning, he even accompanied him to the Swan with Two Necks Inn in Lad Lane and saw him off in the Accommodation Post Coach for Weymouth at three. After this, he dined with Mrs. Wylie in Henrietta Street. And so passed Sunday.

On Monday, Keats at last brought himself to write to Fanny Brawne. It was surely time, he had not written to her since August sixteenth, and his being in London and not going to see her certainly called for an explanation. He gave it, honestly and painfully; and once again we must admire Fanny Brawne, who seems to have understood and forgiven. After telling her that it was a letter from George which had brought him to town, he continues:

> "Am I mad or not? I came by the Friday night coach and have not yet been to Hampstead. Upon my soul it is not my fault. I cannot resolve to mix any pleasure with my days: they go one like another, undistinguishable. If I were to see you to-day it would destroy the half comfortable sullenness I enjoy at present into downright perplexities. I love you too much to venture to Hampstead, I feel it is not paying a visit, but venturing into a fire. *Que feraije*? as the French novel writers say in fun, and I in earnest: really what can I do? Knowing well that my life must be passed in fatigue and trouble, I have been endeavouring to wean myself from you: for to myself alone what can be much of a misery? As far as they regard myself I can despise all events: but I cannot cease to love you. This morning I scarcely know what I am doing. I am going to Walthamstow. I shall return to Winchester tomorrow; whence you shall hear from me in a few days. I am a Coward, I cannot bear the pain of being happy: 'tis out of the question: I must admit no thought of it."

Keats did go to Walthamstow that morning, where he found his sister looking better than he had seen her for some time, but he did not go back to Winchester until Wednesday, and he did not write to Fanny Brawne "in a few days." It was nearly a month before she heard from him again, but then they met, and the fog which Keats had spread between them was cleared away.

I have called it selfishness which kept Keats from writing to Miss Brawne for so long, and so it undoubtedly was in the beginning. But George's unfortunate news puts a

rather different complexion on the case. If Keats were protecting himself before, it was Fanny Brawne even more than himself whom he was protecting now. That he had nothing to offer her, no possible hope of marriage for years to come to bring to her, was becoming increasingly evident. We shall see his attitude very clearly between the lines of a letter to George which he wrote on his return to Winchester. But it should be noticed that he could not force himself to hint that she would be wise to break off the engagement. Things were pretty hopeless, but not yet hopeless enough for that. It was not only "fire" which he feared to find at Hampstead, it was the necessity of telling Miss Brawne how matters stood, and he shrank at the mere thought of this necessity. He simply could bear no more, and especially not that. He must hold to his shred of happiness a little longer and things must take their course, even although that course meant a passive cruelty in regard to her. In fairness to him, however, we must remember that he could not figure his mere silence as a cruelty, because of the blind spot in his mind to which I have already referred.

Seven o'clock on Monday evening found him drinking tea in Pancras Lane with Abbey. Abbey was really disturbed at hearing what Keats had to say, and having read a part of George's letter which Keats showed him expressed himself as greatly concerned. "He will apply to Mr. Glidden the partner, endeavour to get rid of Mr. Jennings's claim, and be expeditious," Keats later told George. Keats speaks of "Mr. Jennings's claim," I suppose he calls it so from the fact that Lieutenant Jennings's widow derived her claim through her husband. I do not understand that Keats's aunt, Mrs. Jennings, had a son, and her husband had long been dead.

Business disposed of, Abbey turned to lighter matters. In Keats's words:

> "He began blowing up Lord Byron while I was sitting with him: 'However, may be the fellow says true things

> now and then,' at which he took up a magazine, and read me some extracts from Don Juan (Lord Byron's last flash poem), and particularly one against literary ambition."

After Keats had left Abbey, he started to walk up Cheapside, but returning to put some letters in the post encountered Abbey again. This walk Keats describes with a good deal of amusement to George:

> "We walked together through the Poultry as far as the hatter's shop he has some concern in. He spoke of it in such a way to me, I thought he wanted me to make an offer to assist him in it. I do believe if I could be a hatter I might be one."

A mad hatter, indeed, he would have been, and he did not make the offer.

Tuesday is a blank. We know nothing about it, nor why Keats changed his mind about going back to Winchester on that day. The only farther details we have concerning these September days in town are that on one of the evenings of his stay he went to Covent Garden at half price, and that in passing Colinagni the print-seller's window he saw "a profile portrait of Sandt, the destroyer of Kotzebue," which seemed to him "like a young Abelard." On Wednesday, he returned to Winchester, having received a promise from Abbey that he would let him know how affairs proceeded, and arranged that if they went well he should again go up to town and instruct Abbey how to forward whatever could be sent to the very remote spot known as Louisville, Kentucky, in the back provinces of the United States of America.

When I spoke of this bird's-eye view of Keats's doings as being all we know of the town visit, I meant all the main facts, for we have an abundance of detail concerning one of Keats's engagements, and this detail carries with it a most interesting sequel. Woodhouse, on reaching Weymouth, wrote to Taylor, and from this letter and Taylor's reply I

propose to quote at some length. Woodhouse's letter,[1] part of it, is as follows, he dates it "Weymouth, Monday 20 Sept. 1819":

> "I left Town on Sunday Evening (12th) & arrived here on the Monday about 1 . . . Keats was in Town the day before I left. He came into 93 unexpectedly, while I was in the midst of a recapitulation to Hessey of the strong points of the matter between yourselves and the Capt . . . K. came about his Chancery Suit that is to be: or rather that is not to be, if he succeeds in the object of his journey to London; which is to dissuade some old aunt from going into that Court. — He took his breakfast with me on the Sunday, and remained with me till I stept into the coach for this place at 3 o'clock. I was much gratified with his company. He wanted I believe to publish the Eve of St. Agnes & Lamia *immediately*: but Hessey told him it could not answer to do so now. I wondered why he said nothing of Isabella: & assured him it would please more than the Eve of St. Agnes — He said he could not bear the former now. It appeared to him mawkish. This certainly cannot be so. The feeling is very likely to come across an author on review of a former work of his own, particularly where the objects of his present meditations are of a more sobered & unpassionate character. The feeling of mawkishness seems to be that which comes upon us where anything of great tenderness & excessive simplicity is met with when we are not in a sufficiently tender & simple frame of mind to bear it: when we experience a sort of revulsion, or resiliency (if there be such a word) from the sentiment or expression. Now I believe there is nothing in the most passionate parts of Isabella to excite this feeling. It may, as may Lear, leave the reader far behind: but there is none of the sugar & butter sentiment, that cloys & disgusts. He had the 'Eve of St. A." copied fair. He has made trifling alterations, inserted an additional stanza early in the poem to make the *legend* more intelligible, and correspondent with what afterwards takes place, particularly with respect to the

[1] Morgan Collection. Partly published in Sir Sidney Colvin's *Life of John Keats*. Third Edition.

supper & the playing on the lute. — he retains the name of Porphyro — has altered the last 3 lines to leave on the reader a sense of pettish disgust, by bringing old Angela in (only) dead stiff & ugly. He says he likes that the poem should leave off with this change of sentiment — it was what he aimed at, & was glad to find from my objections to it that he has succeeded. — I apprehend he had a fancy for trying his hand at an attempt to play with his reader & fling him off at last — I sho'd have thought he affected the 'Don Juan' style of swinging up sentiment & sneering: but that he had before asked Hessey if he co'd procure him a sight of that work, as he had not met with it, and if the E. of St. A. had not in all probability been altered before his Lordship had then flown in the face of the public. There was another alteration, which I abused for "a full hour by the *Temple* clock." You know if a thing has a decent side, I generally look no further — As the Poem was origi'y written, *we* innocent ones (ladies & myself) might very well have supposed that Porphyro, when acquainted with Madeline's love for him, & when 'he arose, Etherial flush'd &c.&c. (turn to it) set himself at once to persuade her to go off with him, & succeeded & went over the 'Dartmoor black' (now changed for some other place) to be married in right honest chaste & sober wise. But, as it is now altered, as soon as M. has declared her love, P. winds by degrees his arm round her, presses breast to breast, and acts all the acts of a bonâfide husband, while she fancies she is only playing the part of a wife in a dream. This alteration is of about 3 stanzas; and tho' there are no improper expressions but all is left to inference, and tho' profanely speaking, the Interest on the reader's imagination is greatly heightened, yet I do apprehend it will render the poem unfit for ladies, & indeed scarcely to be mentioned to them among the 'things that are.' He says he does not want ladies to read his poetry: that he writes for men — & that if in the former poem there was an opening for a doubt what took place, it was his fault for not writing clearly & comprehensibly — that he sh'd despise a man who would be such an eunuch in sentiment as to leave a maid, with that character about her, in such a situation: & sh'd despise himself to write about

&c.&c.&c. — and all this sort of Keats-like rhodomontade. — But you will see the work I dare say.

He then read to me Lamia, which he has half fair-copied: the rest is rough. I was much pleased with it. I can use no other terms for you know how badly he reads his own poetry: & you know how slow I am in catching, even the sense of poetry read by the best reader for the 1st time. And his poetry really must be studied to be properly appreciated. The story is to this effect. Hermes is hunting for a nymph, when from a wood he hears his name & a song relating to his loss — Mercury finds out that it comes from a serpent, who promises to show him his nymph if he will turn the serpent into a woman: This he agrees to: upon which the serpent breathes on his eyes when he sees his nymph who had been beside them listening invisibly. The serpent had seen a young man of Corinth with whom she had fallen desperately in love — She is metamorphosed into a beautiful woman, the change is quite Ovidian, but better — she then finds the youth, & they live together in a palace in the middle of Corinth (described, or rather pictured out in very good costume) the entrance of which no one can see (like the cavern Prince Ahmed found in the Arabian Nights when searching for his lost arrow.) There they live & love, 'the world forgetting: of the world forgot.' He wishes to marry her & introduce her to his friends as his wife. But this would be a forfeiture of her immortality & she refuses — at length (for says K. — 'women love to be forced to do a thing, by a fine fellow — *such as this* — I forget his name — was) she consents. The Palace door becomes visible — to the 'astonishment of the natives' — the friends are invited to the wedding-feast — & K. wipes the cits & the low-lived ones: of some of whom he says 'who make their mouth a napkin to their thumb' in the midst of this Imperial splendour. The lover had seen his tutor Appollonius that morning, while in a car with his Lamia; he had a scowl on his brow, which makes the hearts of the lovers sink; & she asks him, who that frowning old fellow was, as soon as A. passed. — He appears at the feast: damps the joy of the two by his presence — sits over against the woman: He is a Magician. He looks earnestly

at the woman: so intently & to such effect, that she reads in his eyes that she is discovered: & vanishes away, shrieking. The lover is told that she was a 'Lamia' & goes mad for the loss of her, & dies. You may suppose all these events have given K. scope for some beautiful poetry: which even in this cursory hearing of it, came every now & then upon me & made me 'start, as tho' a sea nymph quired.' The metre is Drydenian heroic — with many triplets, & many alexandrines. But this K. observed, & I agreed, was required, as rather quite in character with the language & sentiment in those particular parts. K. has a fine feeling when & where he may use poetical licenses with effect. He very kindly reproached me with never writing to him. You may suppose I promised amendment & stipulated (as Paddy says) 'that all the reciprocity should not be on one side.' The last thing, as he shook me by the hand, he promised to drop me a line to Bath: 'and if (said he) *it should be in verse*, I dare say you will forgive me.' He parted with me at the Coach door. I had the inside all to myself: and I amused myself with diving into a deep reverie, & recalling all that had passed during the 6 hours we were tête à tête. I make no apology for stuffing my letter with these Keatsiana. I am sure nothing else I could say would have half the interest. And I deem myself in luck to have such a subject to write about."

The receipt of this letter threw the prudish Taylor into a state of real agitation. The odd attitude of the times, which dared do almost anything and dared say almost nothing, is exemplified in Taylor's answer. Keats's three stanzas appear to be lost, the only hint of them is contained in two very mild cancelled lines:

"See while she speaks his arms encroaching slow
Have zon'd her, heart to heart — loud, loud the dark winds blow."

It seems impossible that anything so innocuous as this could have shocked Woodhouse and Taylor, even making allowance for the times, and therefore I think we must

believe that Keats eventually destroyed the offending stanzas.

Taylor's letter,[1] so much of it as refers to Keats, runs in this wise:

"Bakewell Sat 25th Sep 1819.

My dear Dick,

Your welcome Letter has just reached me, having been forwarded in a parcel from Retford, which place I left last Tuesday. — I sit down to reply to it, more perhaps to express my regret at what you tell me of the Changes in the Eve of St. Agnes, than for any deliberate purpose of saying my say on things in general. — This Folly of Keats is the most Stupid piece of Folly I can conceive. — He does not bear the ill opinion of the world calmly, & yet he will not allow it to form a good opinion of Him & his writings. He repented of this Conduct when Endymion was published as much as a Man can repent, who shows by the accidental Expression of Disappointment, Mortification & Disgust that he has met with a Result different from that which he had anticipated — Yet he will again challenge the same Neglect or Censure, & again (I pledge my Discernment on it) be vexed at the Reception he has prepared for himself. — This Vaporing is as far from sound Fortitude, as the Conduct itself in the Instances before us, is devoid of good Feeling and good Sense. — I don't know how the Meaning of the new Stanzas is wrapped up, but I will not be accessory (I can answer also for H. I think) towards publishing anything which can only be read by Men, since even on their Minds a bad Effect must follow the Encouragement of those thoughts which cannot be raised without Impropriety. —

If it was so natural a process in Keats's Mind to carry on the Train of his Story in the way he has done, that he could not write decently, if he had that Disease of the Mind which renders the Perception too dull to discover Right from Wrong in Matters of moral Taste, I should object equally then as now to the Sanctioning of the Infirmity by an act of cool Encouragement on my part, but then he

[1] Author's Collection.

would be personally perhaps excusable — As it is, the flying in the Face of all Decency & Discretion is doubly offensive from its being accompanied with so preposterous a Conceit on his part of being able to overcome the best found Habits of our Nature. — Had he known truly what the Society and what the Suffrages of Women are worth, he would never have thought of depriving himself of them. — So far as he is unconsciously silly in this Proceeding I am sorry for him, but for the rest I cannot but confess to you that it excites in me the Strongest Sentiments of Disapprobation — Therefore my dear Dick if he will not so far concede to my wishes as to leave the passage as it originally stood, I must be content to admire his Poems with some other Imprint, & in so doing I can reap as much Delight from the Perusal of them as if they were our own property, without having the disquieting Consideration attached to them of our approving, by the 'Imprimateur,' those Parts which are unfit for publication. —

You will think me too severe again. Well then; I will suspend my Judgment till I see or hear more, but if these my present Views are shown to be no Illusion I must act as I have described — How strange too that he should have taken such a Dislike to Isabella — I still think of it exactly as you do, & from what he copied out of Lamia in a late Letter I fancy I shall prefer it to that poem also. — The Extract he gave me was from the Feast: I did not enter so well into it as to be qualified to criticise, but whether it be a want of Taste for such Subjects as Fairy Tales, or that I do not perceive true Poetry except it is in Conjunction with good Sentiment I cannot tell but it did not promise to please me. —"

After reading these two letters, we can understand why Keats found Brown's society so refreshing. If Brown acted too much as he talked, at least he was all of a piece, a good, square, burly piece of robustious human nature. Yet, by this letter of his, we can see that Taylor was no fool. He put his finger at once on Keats's weak spot, that his cynicism was merely bitterness born of hurt feelings. He

did not like the lines from *Lamia* which Keats had sent him, and no wonder when we see what they were, which I believe no living person but myself has yet done. What possible passage in the poem can Woodhouse refer to when he quotes that egregious remark of someone's mouth being a napkin to his thumb? The extract from Keats's letter of September fifth as published by Buxton Forman contains nothing of all this. But Buxton Forman is careful to explain that, in the copy of the letter sent him, the lines from *Lamia* were not given, and that he has made them up from an early manuscript found among Lord Houghton's papers. Now the lines quoted in the original letter[1] are very different from Buxton Forman's guess at them. The passage begins with the line:

"A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone"

and continues for fifty-eight lines. It differs in several places from the version afterwards published, but it is not until the line beginning "Soft went the music" is reached that it ceases entirely to accord with it. From then to the final line copied in the letter, there is no resemblance between what Keats sent to Taylor and read to Woodhouse and the poem as we know it. This is what Taylor read and Woodhouse listened to:

"Soft went the music, and the tables all
Sparkled beneath the viewless banneral
Of Magic; and dispos'd in double row
Seem'd edged Parterres of white bedded snow,
Adorn'd along the sides with living flowers
Conversing, laughing after sunny showers:
And, as the pleasant appetite entic'd
Gush came the wine, and sheer the meats were slic'd.
Soft went the Music; the flat salver sang
Kiss'd by the emptied goblet, — and again it rang:
Swift bustled by the servants: — here's a health

[1] Author's Collection.

Cries one — another — then, as if by stealth,
A Glutton drains a cup of Helicon,
Too fast down, down his throat the brief delight is gone.
'Where is that Music?' cries a Lady fair.
'Aye, where is it my dear? Up in the air?'
Another whispers. 'Poo!' saith Glutton 'Mum!'
Then makes his shiny mouth a napkin for his thumb.
&c. &c. &c."

If Keats had been altering the *Eve of St. Agnes* in this vein, we cannot be too thankful to Woodhouse and Taylor for suppressing him.

Keats returned to Winchester on Wednesday, September fifteenth, with his head full of plans and perplexities and no one to talk them over with, for Brown was still away. Two days later, on Friday, he began a letter to George which rambled on for ten days. I have already quoted somewhat from it, and shall quote more as necessity arises. The first part of this letter is taken up with an account of his visit to town, in the midst of which, apropos of Haslam, Keats breaks into one of his impromptu jingles, the one named by some subsequent editor *A Party of Lovers*. Keats calls these lines "a few nonsense verses" and they are no more. The type of tea-table lover here lampooned cannot even be considered as a result of Keats's unhappy musings on his own condition.

But Keats was not always unhappy. The next slice of the letter, written on Saturday, records one of those strange veerings from grave to gay to which he was mercifully subject. He begins:

> "With my inconstant disposition it is no wonder that this morning, amid all our bad times and misfortunes, I should feel so alert and well-spirited . . . It is because my hopes are ever paramount to my dispair."

Perhaps this was the reason of his high spirits, but is it not more likely, in the present instance, that a comforting

letter from Fanny Brawne in answer to his note of the Monday before may have had something to do with it? Whether the high spirits were cause or effect, they are closely related to a re-reading of *Lamia* which he had just been engaged upon. Here is his opinion of that poem:

> "I have been reading over a part of a short poem I have composed lately, called Lamia, and I am certain there is that sort of fire in it which must take hold of people in some way. Give them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation — what they want is sensation of some sort."

Sunday seems to have been largely spent in going over and revising the fragment of the *Eve of St. Mark*, begun the February before at Hampstead, for on Monday he ushers in a copy of it to George by means of this enchanting prologue:

> "This day is a grand day for Winchester. They elect the Mayor. It was indeed high time the place should have some sort of excitement. There was nothing going on — all asleep. Not an old maid's sedan returning from a card party; and if any old women have got tipsy at christenings, they have not exposed themselves in the street. The first night, tho', of our arrival here there was a slight uproar took place at about ten of the clock. We heard distinctly a noise patting down the street, as of a walking-cane of the good old dowager breed; and a little minute after we heard a less voice observe, 'What a noise the ferril made — it must be loose.' Brown wanted to call the constables, but I observed it was only a little breeze, and would soon pass over. The side streets here are excessively maiden-lady-like, the doorsteps always fresh from the flannel. The knockers have a very staid, serious, nay almost awful quietness about them. I never saw so quiet a collection of lions' and rams' heads. The doors most part black, with a little brass handle just above the keyhole, so that you may easily shut yourself out of your own house. He! He! There is none of your Lady Bellaston ringing and rapping here; no thundering Jupiter-footmen, no opera-treble tattoos, but a mod-

> est lifting up of the knocker by a set of little wee old fingers that peep through grey mittens, and a dying fall thereof. The great beauty of poetry is that it makes everything, every place, interesting. The palatine Venice and the abbotine Winchester are equally interesting. Some time since I began a poem called 'The Eve of St. Mark,' quite in the spirit of town quietude. I think it will give you the sensation of walking about an old country town in a coolish evening. I know not whether I shall ever finish it; I will give it as far as I have gone."

Here follows the *Eve of St. Mark*, and after it Keats remarks: "I hope you will like this for all its carelessness." Like it! To some of us in this day and age, *St. Mark* ranks so high among Keats's works as to be the equal of any, be the other what it may. Rossetti considered it as "perhaps, with *La Belle Dame sans Merci* the chastest and choicest example of his maturing manner."[1] It is certainly that; the poem exhibits all Keats's virtues and practically none of his faults. Not a trace of his youthful sentimentality disfigures it. Story, atmosphere, colour, line, imagination, human interest, we have all these elements at their best in the hundred and nineteen lines of this fragment. It is as nearly perfect of its kind as a poem can be. The opening lines are a marvel of reticent presentation. There is not a redundant word, and not a word too few. I think no picture which Keats has given us quite equals this:

> "Upon a Sabbath-day it fell;
> Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
> That call'd the folk to evening prayer;
> The city streets were clean and fair
> From wholesome drench of April rains;
> And, on the western window panes,
> The chilly sunset faintly told
> Of unmatur'd green vallies cold,
> Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
> Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,

[1] Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
And daisies on the aguish hills.
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:
The silent streets were crowded well
With staid and pious companies,
Warm from their fire-side orat'ries;
And moving, with demurest air,
To even-song, and vesper prayer.
Each arched porch, and entry low,
Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,
With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
While play'd the organ loud and sweet."

There is no need to comment on poetry such as that; it is its own commentary. I shall only ask my readers to notice how the bell, clanging once, twice, at a carefully spaced interval, gives just the effect of a real bell, slowly, regularly sounding through the damp evening air, above the continuous murmur of shuffling feet, and how it harmonizes with, and breaks in upon, the tones of the organ. So excellent is this poem that one longs to quote it all, from the sheer difficulty of choosing parts. Since I cannot do that, I shall quote no more. It must be read, and read with attention, surrendering one's self to its swift, although gentle, changes of effect. *St. Mark* is a quiet poem, and it must be read with a quiet heart and a mind smooth and ready to take impressions, so that we may not merely read, but *see*, first the Minster square, then the panelled room with the young girl reading her great illuminated book, then the book itself and its strange pictures and crooked mediæval script. Scholars take great pleasure in informing us that Keats's attempt at Middle English is no English at all, unless it be Chatterton's. It may be well to know this as a matter of curiosity; from the poetical point of view, it is of no importance whatever. *St. Mark* is a perfect thing no matter how incorrect it may be historically, criticism on that score is of no moment here.

The tale is based on another old legend, one peculiar to the evening before the day dedicated to St. Mark, which falls on April twenty-fifth. According to this legend, any one standing beside the door of a church on the evening in question will see entering it the apparitions of those persons belonging to the parish who are doomed to die during the coming year.

Rossetti was the first person to point out that Keats's fragment undoubtedly referred to this superstition;[1] and that his surmise was correct, was proved by the discovery of a portion of another manuscript of the poem by Buxton Forman in 1906. This passage also occurs copied out by Woodhouse in one of his Commonplace Books.[2] I give it here from Professor de Sélincourt's fourth edition of Keats's *Poems*:

"Gif ye wol stonden hardie wight —
Amiddes of the blacke night —
Righte in the churchè porch, pardie
Ye wol behold a companie
Appouchen thee full dolourouse
For sooth to sain from everich house
Be it in City or village
Wol come the Phantom and image
Of ilka geat and ilka carl
Whom coldè Deathè hath in parle
And wol some day that very year
Touchen with foulè venime spear
And sadly do them all to die —
Hem all shalt thou see verilie —
And everichon shall by thee pass
All who must die that year Alas."

Sir Sidney Colvin is greatly exercised to discover whether the setting of the poem itself be mediæval or modern. The former it certainly cannot be; as to the latter, it depends upon what interpretation one gives to the word "modern."

[1] Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.
[2] Woodhouse (*Poems II.*) Crewe Collection. Discovered in 1913.

The setting of *St. Mark* need not be exactly of Keats's time, but it as certainly dates to some period subsequent to the making of Sunday a solemn day rather than a gay one. Once again, it does not matter. Nothing matters here but the extraordinary beauty of the poem itself.

It is unfortunate that we have no means of determining how much of this fragment was composed in February, and how much was done in September. We have already observed Keats's remarkable versatility in changing from one atmosphere to another in the shortest possible time. For a man who could sandwich *Otho* in between the two parts of *Lamia*, the jump from *Lamia* to *St. Mark* presents no sort of obstacle. On the whole, I think the change of mood from *St. Agnes' Eve* to the *Eve of St. Mark* was a more difficult feat to perform. Keats had been working over *St. Agnes' Eve* in February, but he had also been working on it in September. However we look at it, *St. Mark* stands apart and by itself. No other of his narratives has quite this touch, the nearest approach to it is the ode *To Autumn* which was apparently also done on this Sunday.

It is curious to note how much more mature in many ways *St. Mark* is than *Lamia*. It, and the ode *To Autumn*, reflect more clearly what Keats was at this moment than does that poem with its occasional returns to his earlier manner. Keats himself gives us the key in that part of his letter to George written on Tuesday, September twenty-first. He says:

> "From the time you left me our friends say I have altered completely — am not the same person . . . Some think I have lost that poetical ardour and fire 'tis said I once had — The fact is, perhaps I have; but, instead of that, I hope I shall substitute a more thoughtful and quiet power. I am more frequently now contented to read and think, but now and then haunted with ambitious thoughts. Quieter in my pulse, improved in my digestion, exerting myself against vexing speculations, scarcely content to

> write the best verses for the fever they leave behind. I want to compose without this fever. I hope I one day shall. You would scarcely imagine I could live alone so comfortably — 'Kepen in solitarinesse.'"

The quotation from *St. Mark* links this passage to the poem, as, indeed, we know it to have been linked from the beginning. In *St. Mark*, the altered Keats stands forth very plainly. I imagine he never finished the poem from the knowledge that he could not do so without undergoing the fever he dreaded. Cool as the fragment sounds, it cannot have been written without heat; but the energy required to carry on and finish a sustained poem, such as *St. Mark* must have been, is greater than that needed to begin it. This Keats knew, and the poem was never completed. Poetry cannot be written without fever. The creation of a work of art in any form is a terribly exhausting thing. An artist in normal health is none the worse for this exhaustion in the long run; and he is sustained through it by the immensely tonic and bracing effect inherent in the act of creation. One sensation relieves the other, and in the end both together bring him back without injury to an even plane. The life of an artist is made up of these rises and falls of temperature. He is like a man whose work necessitates a deprivation of sleep on certain nights in the week which he is accustomed to make up on others.

Keats's difficulty lay in the fact that he was not in normal health. He was in no state to stand successive shocks to his nervous system. It took him too long to recover, his resilience was entirely sapped by illness. Every poem he wrote shook his vitality to its foundations, and slowly, steadily, it gave way, until he was powerless to live and write, and the writing had to go. I have called this chapter "A Tide and its Undertow" advisedly. Mentally, he was in the heyday of maturing force. Had he been well,

it is quite evident that an almost torrential flow of poetry was due, and that his happiness would have been in giving vent to it. Desperately ill as he was, it was only a question which could keep the upper hand, the power of creation, or the debility of disease, one constantly pushing him forward, the other forever pulling him back. Not until this Summer at Shanklin and Winchester did his dual condition assume the aspect of a real struggle, and this, sure to come at last as it was, might have been postponed a little longer had not the wrench away from Fanny Brawne weakened his energy in other directions by just the amount needed to fight his misery. Effort became a huge monster seeking to destroy him. He made a gallant resistance, but escape he could not. From this time on he fought a losing battle.

It was only by fits and starts at this period, however, that Keats was aware of his own growing inertia. Immediately after his return to Winchester he was in unusually good spirits for a while. For a brief moment, poetry had an inning. The weather was beautiful, and he thought he had hit upon a plan which would do away with some, if not all, of his troubles. I will come to that presently.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Keats did a deal of letter writing. To Dilke he wrote: "Whatever I take to for the time I cannot leave off in a hurry; letter writing is the go now; I have consumed a quire at least." Some of this quire went to Reynolds and some to Woodhouse. At the moment, he was so much in love with Winchester, and his description of it sent to George, that he copied it to Reynolds on Tuesday, adding:

> "How beautiful the season is now — How fine the air — a temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather — Dian skies — I never liked stubble-field so much as now — Aye better than the chilly green of Spring. Somehow, a stubble-field looks warm — in the

same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it."

What he composed was the ode *To Autumn*. His reference to the "chilly green of Spring," points clearly to the *Eve of St. Mark*. I imagine him to have been working at *St. Mark* before his walk, and that, on coming in, he immediately wrote *To Autumn* as a sort of companion piece and antithesis. There is another correspondence between the two poems in this sentence of the letter, which follows shortly after the one I have quoted:

"I always somehow associate Chatterton with autumn. He is the purest writer in the English Language. He has no French idiom or particles, like Chaucer — 'tis genuine English Idiom in English words."

It has long been known that Keats copied out the ode *To Autumn* in the letter written that same day to Woodhouse, but for many years this letter was supposed to be irrecoverably lost, as all trace of it had vanished. It was my good fortune to buy it, quite unwittingly, with a number of other letters written by Keats, over twenty years ago, but I have only recently discovered its history. This whole collection of letters was bequeathed by Woodhouse to Taylor, and on Taylor's death passed into the possession of a niece who, many years later, sold them at auction. They were bought by a London book-seller from whom I purchased them. I allowed this "lost" letter to be printed in the *Keats Memorial Volume*, and I reproduce it here directly from the original.[1]

"Tuesday.

DEAR WOODHOUSE,

If you see what I have said to Reynolds before you come to your own dose you will put it between the bars unread;

[1] At the time the copy was made for the *Keats Memorial Volume*, I was ill and unable to go over the transcription, which, I fear, contained errors. The letter as here printed is absolutely correct.

provided they have begun fires in Bath. I should like a bit of fire to night — one likes a bit of fire. How glorious the Blacksmith's shops look now. I stood to night before one till I was very near listing for one. Yes I should like a bit of fire — at a distance about 4 feet 'not quite hob nob' — as wordsworth says. The fact was I left Town on Wednesday — determined to be in a hurry. You don't eat travelling — you're wrong — beef — beef — I like the look of a sign. The Coachman's face says eat eat, eat. I never feel more contemptible than when I am sitting by a goodlooking coachman. One is nothing. Perhaps I eat to persuade myself I am somebody. You must be when slice after slice — but it wont do — the Coachman nibbles a bit of bread — he's favour'd — he's had a Call — a Hercules Methodist. Does he live by bread alone? O that I were a Stage Manager — perhaps that's as old as doubling the Cape. 'How are ye old 'un? hey! why dont'e speak?' O that I had so sweet a Breast to sing as the Coachman hath! I'd give a penny for his Whistle — and bow to the Girls on the road—Bow—nonsense—'tis a nameless graceful slang action. Its effect on the women suited to it must be delightful. It touches 'em in the ribs — en passant — very off hand — very fine — Sed thougum formosa vale vale inquit, Heigho la! You like poetry better — so you shall have some I was going to give Reynolds.

Season of Mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  The vines with fruit that round the thatch eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazle-shells
With a white kernel; to set budding more,
  And still more later flowers for the bees
  Untill they think warm days will never cease
    For summer has o'er brimmed the[i]r clammy Cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft, amid thy stores?
  Sometimes, whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Dased with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a Cyder press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue:
Then in a wailful quire the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives and dies;
And full grown Lambs loud bleat from hilly bourne:
Hedge crickets sing, and now with treble soft
The Redbreast whistles from a garden Croft
And gather'd Swallows twitter in the Skies.

---

I will give you a few lines from Hyperion on account of a word in the last line of a fine sound.

'Mortal! that thou mays't understand aright
I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
Making comparisons of earthly things;
Or thou might'st better listen to the wind
Though it blows *legend-laden* through the trees.

---

I think you will like the following description of the Temple of Saturn.

I look'd around upon the carved sides
Of an old Sanctuary, with roof august
Builded so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds
Might sail beneath, as o'er the stars of heaven.
So old the place was I remember none
The like upon the earth; what I had seen
Of grey Cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers
The superannuations of sunk realms,

Or nature's rocks hard toil'd in winds and waves,
Seem'd but the failing of decrepit things
To that eternal-domed monument.
Upon the marble, at my feet, there lay
Store of strange vessels and large draperies
Which needs had been of dyed asbestos wove,
Or in that place the moth could not corrupt,
So white the linen, so, in some distinct
Ran imageries from a sombre loom.
All in a mingled heap confused there lay
Robes, golden tongs, censer and chafing dish
Girdles, and chains and holy jewelries.
Turning from these, with awe once more I rais'd
My eyes to fathom the space every way;
The embossed roof, the silent massive range
Of Columns north and south, ending in Mist
Of nothing; then to the eastward where black gates
Were shut against the Sunrise ever more.

---

I see I have completely lost my direction. So I e'n make you pay double postage. I had begun a sonnet in french of Ronsard — on my word 'tis very capable of poetry. I was stop'd by a circumstance not worth mentioning. I intended to call it La Platonique Chevalresque — I like the second line —

Non ne suis si audace a languire
De m'empresser au cœur nos tendres mains. &c.

Here is what I had written for a sort of induction —

Fanatics have their dreams wherewith they weave
A Paradise for a Sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at Heaven: pity these have not
Trac'd upon vellum or wild indian leaf
The shadows of melodious utterance:
But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die,
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable charm
And dumb enchantment.

---

My poetry will never be fit for anything it does n't cover its ground well. You see he she is off her guard and does n't move a peg though Prose is coming up in an awkward style enough. Now a blow in the spondee wo'd finish her but let it get over this line of circumvallation if it can. These are unpleasant Phrase.

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Now for all this you two must write me a letter apiece — for as I know you will interread one another. I am still writing to Reynolds as well as yourself. As I say to George I am writing *to* you but *at* your Wife — And dont forget to tell Reynolds of the fairy tale Undine. Ask him if he has read any of the American Brown's[1] novels that Hazlitt speaks so much of. I have read one call'd Wieland — very powerful — something like Godwin. Between Schiller and Godwin. A Domestic prototype of Shiller's Armenian. More clever in plot and incident than Godwin. A strange american scion of the German trunk. Powerful genius — accomplish'd horrors — I shall proceed tomorrow. Wednesday — I am all in a Mess here — embowell'd in Winchester. I wrote two Letters to Brown one from said Place, and one from London, and neither of them has reach'd him. I have written him a long one this morning and am so perplex'd as to be an object to Curiosity to you quiet People. I hire myself a show waggon and a trumpeter. Here's the wonderful Man whose Letters wont go! — All the infernal imaginary thunderstorms from the Post-office are beating upon me — so that 'unpoeted I write.' Some curious body has detained my Letters. I am sure of it. They know not what to make of me — not an acquaintance in the Place — what can I be about? so they open my Letters. Being in a lodging house, and not so self will'd, but I am a little cowardly I dare not spout my rage against the Ceiling. Besides I should be run through the Body by the major in the next room. I don't think his wife would attempt such a thing. Now I am going to be serious. After revolving certain circumstances in my Mind; chiefly connected with the late american letter — I have determined to take up my abode in a cheap Lodging in Town and get employment in some of our elegant Periodical

[1] Charles Brockden Brown. 1771–1810.

Works. I will no longer live upon hopes. I shall carry my plan into execution speedily — I shall live in Westminster — from which a walk to the British Museum will be noisy and muddy — but otherwise pleasant enough. I shall enquire of Hazlitt how the figures of the market stand. O that I could something agrestunal, pleasant, fountain-voic'd — not plague you with unconnected nonsense — But things won't leave me *alone*. I shall be in Town as soon as either of you. I only wait for an answer from Brown: if he receives mine which is now a very moot point. I will give you a few reasons why I shall persist in not publishing The Pot of Basil. It is too smokeable. I can get it smoak'd at the Carpenters shaving chimney much more cheaply. There is too much inexperience of line, and simplicity of knowledge in it — which might do very well after one's death, but not while one is alive. There are very few would look to the reality. I intend to use more finesse with the Public. It is possible to write fine things which cannot be laugh'd at in any way. Isabella is what I should call were I a reviewer 'A weak-sided Poem' with an amusing sober-sadness about it. Not that I do not think Reynolds and you are quite right about it — it is enough for me. But this will not do to be public. If I may so say, in my dramatic capacity I enter fully into the feeling: but in Propria Persona I should be apt to quiz it myself. There is no objection of this kind to Lamia — A good deal to St. Agnes Eve — only not so glaring. Would as I say I could write you something sylvestian. But I have no time to think: I am an otiosus-preoccupatus Man. I think upon crutches, like the folks in your Pump room. Have you seen old Bramble[1] yet — they say he's on his last legs. The gout did not treat the old Man well so the Physician superseded it, and put the dropsy in office, who gets very fat upon his new employment, and behaves worse than the other to the old Man. But he'll have his house about his ears soon. We shall have another fall of Siege-arms. I suppose Mrs. Humphrey persists in a big-belley — poor thing she little thinks how she is spoiling the corners of her mouth — and making her nose quite a piminy. Mr.

[1] The old squire in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*.

Humphrey I hear was giving a Lecture in the gaming-room — when some one call'd out Sponsey! I hear too he has received a challenge from a gentleman who lost that evening. The fact is Mr. H. is a mere nothing out of his Bath-room. Old Tabitha[1] died in being bolstered up for a whist party. They had to cut again. Chowder[2] died long ago — Mrs. H. laments that the last last time they *put him* (i.e. to breed) he didn't take. They say he was a direct descendent of Cupid and Veny in the Spectator. This may be easily known by the Parish Books. If you do not write in the course of a day or two — direct to me at Rice's. Let me know how you pass your times and how you are.

Your sincere friend
JOHN KEATS

Hav'nt heard from Taylor."

There is so much to remark about this letter that I am almost at a loss where to begin. I have already spoken at such length on the ode *To Autumn*, both here and in an earlier chapter,[3] that it is unnecessary to say much more. *To Autumn* ranks with the *Grecian Urn* and the *Nightingale* as one of Keats's best odes. It is important to note how subtly it differs from either of those poems, chiefly from the fact that it is totally devoid of any suggestion beyond itself. There was an undercurrent of meaning and emotion in all the Spring odes which *To Autumn* is conspicuously without. It is picture and no more. Its emotion, so far as it has any, is the mere delight of sensation received through the eyes, ears, nose, and even touch, the touch of wind and sun on an eager skin. *To Autumn* is an almost completely impersonal poem. The poet himself is merely an exquisitely sensitive recording medium. The charm of the poem lies in just this fact, that nothing comes between us and the day Keats wished us to see. There are no echoes, no literary images, all is clear, single, and perfectly attuned. Keats excluded himself, but the artist

[1] Tabitha Bramble, the squire's sister. [2] Tabitha Bramble's dog.
[3] See Vol. I, pp. 503–504.

in him was never more alive. He adds a line to the stanza form of his previous odes, but adds it as penultimate, so keeping his rhyme pattern intact. Oh, the excellent musician that was Keats!

And now I come to *Hyperion*—*Hyperion* which has been dodging past us for so long. I have waited to speak of it until we reached this letter, for, without it, it was impossible to explain all the steps which have led me to a startling discovery. Before revealing this, however, I wish to make a few things quite plain. *Hyperion*, both versions, was written on a theory; it was one of those efforts to discover a direction which we have seen Keats so much occupied with all the previous Autumn and Winter. Keats had conceived the idea of writing a poem on the subject of Hyperion while he was still at work on *Endymion*, but in what form the poem was to be written he took some time to decide. The only thing he seems to have been fully determined about was that it should in no way resemble the form of *Endymion*. Let me state at the outset that I quite agree with Keats in considering the result — or at least one of the results — a failure, the other is too fragmentary to enable us to come to a final decision concerning it.

Keats worked indefatigably at his idea. He tried it, gave it up; tried it on another plan, and gave that up; went back to his first attempt, tinkered — tinkered — but was never satisfied. Keats knew that *Hyperion* was a good imitation of a manner, but felt underneath that the manner did not fit him, that it was stilted and unnatural. He says as much about the second version, the published *Hyperion*, and although illness took him before he had said much about the other, the very little he had done on it, does, I believe, prove my point.

I realize that to students of Keats I make a strange statement in speaking of a version of *Hyperion* begun and abandoned, another begun and left off, and the first taken up again. I am quite aware that recent criticism believes

the published *Hyperion* to have been the poem which Keats started during Tom's illness; and the (so-called) *Fall* or *Vision* of *Hyperion* to be a recast. The authority for this opinion is Brown, who has stated that in the evenings during November and December, 1819, Keats was "remodelling the fragment of 'Hyperion' into the form of a 'Vision.'" I think it very likely that Keats was working on the *Vision* during these months, more likely still that he told Brown he was going to do so, and tried, only to be once more baffled; but I most surely believe that he had begun it much earlier, probably before the other.

Brown was not always accurate in his recollections, and we must constantly remember that these statements of his are the work of a twenty-year-old memory. For instance, in one thing we must suppose him to be either wrong or confused. He told Lord Houghton that *Hyperion* was begun after Tom's death when Keats had come to live with him at Wentworth Place. But was it?

The attempt to unravel Keats's work at Well Walk before Tom's death, and his work at Wentworth Place after Tom's death, is not a little puzzling, but there are certain indications in the letters which may give us a clue. First, there is the letter to Dilke of September twenty-first, 1818, in which Keats describes himself as obliged to "plunge into abstract images" to relieve himself of the thought of Tom. Then there is the sentence in the letter to Reynolds, written on either the same day or the next: "This morning Poetry has conquered — I have relapsed into those abstractions which are my only life," and it can hardly be supposed that the translation from Ronsard, which he quotes shortly after, accounts for all the "abstractions." Finally there is the reference to Saturn and Ops in the letter to Woodhouse of October twenty-seventh, 1818. All this seems to point to some sort of a beginning made on the poem, particularly when we compare these sentences with another in the October, 1818, letter to George, where

he says that he has "too many interruptions to a train of feeling to be able to write Poetry." This looks very much as though he had been trying to write and could not make a go of it. A little later on, we have what I believe to be corroborative proof that Keats had done some of *Hyperion* at Well Walk. Writing to George on a Thursday in December from Wentworth Place, Keats says: "I am passing a Quiet day — which I have not done for a long while — and if I do continue so, I feel I must again begin with my poetry," and under the date of "Friday" (evidently the next day) he adds: "I think you knew before you left England, that my next subject would be 'the fall of Hyperion.' I went on with it a little last night, but it will take some time to get into the vein again." Now here Keats speaks of the poem as "the fall of Hyperion" which he does nowhere else. The manuscript of the *Vision* has disappeared, but in alluding to it in his interleaved copy of *Endymion* Woodhouse calls it *The Fall of Hyperion, a Dream*, and this is the title he gave to his transcript of the poem which Lord Crewe discovered in 1904.[1] It has been suggested, as Professor de Sélincourt points out, that the influence of Dante is very noticeable in the *Fall*, or *Vision* as I shall call it here. In the Summer of 1818, Keats had been reading Cary's translation of Dante on his Scotch tour, what more natural then than that his first attempt at the poem should be, if only slightly, reminiscent of Dante. There is no suggestion whatever of Dante in *Hyperion* proper, and there is no particular reason why there should be, if the poem were begun, as I believe and Brown definitely states, at Wentworth Place. His re-reading of Dante, which produced his Paolo and Francesca sonnet, post-dates any work done on *Hyperion*. My own opinion is that when Keats returned to the *Vision* after Tom's death he found himself unable to recapture his original mood, and therefore started the poem again on an altered plan. Our reasoning has run full circle, and in this

[1] *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt. Fourth Edition.

instance we see Brown to have been at the same time right, wrong, and confused. *Hyperion* was undoubtedly begun at Wentworth Place after Keats had abandoned his first attempt at the subject, which was the *Vision* — so far Brown was right; but he was wrong to suppose the *Vision* to have been the second version of the poem; and he was confused in not realizing that an earlier version than the one he first knew had been started at Well Walk.

But the evidence just presented is by no means all upon which I base my conclusion. There is considerably more. Writing to George on the twenty-first of September, 1819, Keats says: "I shall never become attached to a foreign idiom, so as to put it into my writings. The Paradise Lost, though so fine in itself, is a corruption of our language . . . I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me . . . I wish to devote myself to another verse alone." The clue to that passage is in the letter written the very next day to Reynolds, where he announces flatly: "I have given up Hyperion — there were too many Miltonic inversions in it." He goes on to ask Reynolds to mark those lines in *Hyperion* which seem to him to contain "the false beauty proceeding from art" and those which have the "true voice of feeling." Already, in April, he had told Woodhouse that he should not go on with the poem, and that this was *Hyperion* is evident from Woodhouse's distinct statement that the fragment consisted of "about 900 lines." The published version has 883 lines, but the *Vision* never got beyond one and a half Cantos, in all 506 lines. We know that Keats's remarks of this sort are not always to be taken as final, and from his saying to Bailey in August: "I have been writing parts of my 'Hyperion,'" I presume that he still had thoughts of returning to it. Now, in Winchester, having glanced over the *Eve of St. Agnes*, worked at it a little and found it good, having written the ode *To Autumn* and found that good also, he was moved to take a look at *Hyperion* and that he

found not good. Hence the decision to abandon it expressed to Reynolds.

Now here is my bomb-shell! The "lines from Hyperion" (at this time, Keats called both versions so indiscriminately) which contained the word "of a fine sound" in this "lost" letter to Woodhouse are the beginning of the Second Canto of the *Vision*, and the "description of the Temple of Saturn," quoted immediately after, are lines 60 to 86 of the First Canto. What does this mean? It means, I think, that, having been disappointed in the effect which the re-reading of *Hyperion* made upon him, he got out what he had written of the *Vision* and was at once struck with its possibilities. I am inclined to think the fragment as it stood ended somewhere in the First Canto, perhaps the whole of the First Canto had been written, and that Keats tried his hand at continuing it then and there; else why should the quotations be out of order. If his "legend-laden" wind were an immediate conception, it was quite natural that he should dash it off to Woodhouse, and go back to the earlier lines afterwards.

That he turned back to the poem again a little later, we see by his quoting the very beginning of Canto I after mentioning the projected French sonnet. Observe that he introduces it by saying: "Here is what I had written for a sort of induction," not "have," as though he had just composed it, but "had," which is, I think, pretty conclusive proof that the lines were old work. There is also another, what we may call a psychological, suggestion here. Keats was reading Ronsard in September, 1818, and it was in the very letter to Reynolds of September twenty-first of that year, the one in which he speaks of relapsing into "those abstractions which are my only life," that he copies his translation of one of Ronsard's sonnets. Now, a year later, he is musing on a sonnet to be written "in french of Ronsard" and suddenly he is reminded of what he was writing the year before just when he was reading Ronsard, it was

the beginning of the *Vision*, whereupon he goes back to his old manuscript again and copies this beginning for Woodhouse. Is it not possible that we have in this reminiscence, if not the actual date, at least one only a few days subsequent to it, of his first putting pen to paper on the subject of Hyperion, for it was also on September twenty-first, 1818, that he wrote the letter to Dilke which I gave as the first witness to my argument? In *Poems II*,[1] Woodhouse refers to some lines of Ronsard in connection with a certain passage in *Hyperion*,[2] so that Ronsard's connection with the subject is not a mere figment of my fancy. It is obvious that his reading of the *Vision* was subsequent to his writing to Reynolds, or he would certainly have asked Reynolds to look over that poem and mark it also. We know that he wrote to Reynolds before he wrote to Woodhouse since he tells Woodhouse so. That Keats did some work on the *Vision* during the late Autumn seems undoubted. Brown can hardly have been entirely mistaken on that score, but it must have been largely revision, for the fragment ends with the sixty-third line of the Second Canto. That he did revise the poem is evident from the fact that the lines here given from Canto I are not exactly like the corresponding lines in the version published by Lord Houghton.[3] It is perhaps suggestive of their immediate origin that the lines from Canto II do not differ at all from those printed, although I admit that this is equally true of the induction. What prevented the completion of the *Vision* was just what prevented the completion of the *Eve of St. Mark* — lack of vital energy.

After the publication of this "lost" letter in the *Memorial Volume*, both Sir Sidney Colvin and Professor de

[1] Crewe Collection.

[2] Quoted in the Addenda to the Notes of Professor de Sélincourt's *The Poems of John Keats*. Fourth Edition.

[3] *Bibliographical and Historical Miscellanies* of the Philobiblon Society. (1856–1857) Vol. III.

Sélincourt went on record[1] as believing the *Vision* to have been entirely written at Winchester. This I emphatically do not believe. If Keats had started a new version of his poem in Winchester, any considerable part of a new version, he would without doubt have mentioned the fact to George to whom he had been speaking of the progress of the poem from time to time. He did not mention the ode *To Autumn*, but that he considered a short poem which he could copy later, while anything so important as a fresh start on his epic would hardly have been accidentally omitted or casually ignored. That Brown thought the *Vision* to be a new thing in the Autumn, merely means that Keats had not told him of the earlier version begun at Well Walk. I do not think that he wrote all that we have of the Second Canto at Winchester, I believe he only began it. As to his evening work in the Autumn, it seems to me quite probable that he worked a little at both versions. Whatever he did, it was very little.

It is extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to deal at all adequately with *Hyperion*, not knowing just how much of the *Vision* was written at Well Walk and how much was done in the Autumn of 1819. The only approach to a definite fact which we have, is that *Hyperion* itself appears to have all been written during the Winter of 1818–19 at Wentworth Place. The more we come to examine it, the clearer it seems, that *Hyperion* was the direct result of the scathing criticisms in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly*, but in a way just the reverse of the old accepted view. Keats's original idea, as we see by the *Vision*, was to show a poet questioning himself, his vocation, demanding of the past where he and his kind stand in the scheme of things. Of what value are he and his work? It is really much the same idea which he had speculated on to Bailey in his letter from Burford Bridge the Autumn before, and again, under a somewhat changed aspect, to Taylor from Shanklin. The

[1] Letters to the *Manchester Guardian*. September 22, 1922.

poet can attain to the possibility of great poetry only by scaling the height of the ideal, the far-rising shrine of his personal, dedicated life. He must lose much to gain more, parts of his ego must perish that sublimer parts may rule. This last idea is given in the form of a symbolical dream, in which the older gods are dethroned and overcome by their more human and beautiful counterparts, the hierarchy of Grecian mythology. All this comes precious near to being allegory, but luckily never quite gets there. It does not get there because Keats was working with two entirely separate themes; one, the question of the poet's value to humanity; the other, a mythological narrative, full of grandeur certainly, but vague in outline, and although capable of many implications, explicit in none. The *Vision* was begun fairly in the teeth of the reviews, that must be fully understood; it was not abandoned until some months later. But why was it abandoned at all? That is the important question.

I think that when Keats, in December, at Wentworth Place, went back to the poem, he was suddenly struck with the fact that his beginning opened itself to some of the same strictures which had been made on *Endymion*. This, he felt, must not be, his next epic should in no way fall foul of any of the objections which had been made to the earlier poem. There should be nothing pretty in this new effort, all should be large, stern, of a sweeping and majestic utterance. He would show the world that "good Johnny Keats" was capable of the grand style if ever poet was, and promptly started to remodel his poem and write it as a drama only, a gigantic, impersonal drama, symbolical for those who searched for symbols, a surging, fulminating tale to those who did not.

Keats's sheer cleverness is to be seen in no other poem to anything like the extent it is in *Hyperion*. That he could write it, is a marvel. For a poet to write such excellent poetry as so much of *Hyperion* is, in a purely adopted style,

is a tour de force of the first order. *Hyperion* is a failure, not because it is not good, but because it is not honest. Keats is not speaking with his own voice, this sedate and stately pattern is none of his, there is no settled conviction here. This is merely a tracing from a pattern of an older age, and tracings are not genuine art no matter how deftly they are done.

Precisely why Keats has had so immense an effect upon succeeding generations is that he represents an original inspiration. He gave a new direction to poetry, and this direction, chiefly through his disciple Tennyson, has until very recently dominated English verse. Even now, when the many feeble imitations of his manner have brought about a temporary lull in the popularity of his idiom, a modern student can find much of the most evident of present-day trends in his poems. It is the simplicity of his verse, the perfectly straightforward diction of much of it, the vividness of this diction, the directness of his attack, the fearlessness of his innovations, for which we value him most in this early twentieth century.

What Keats tried to do in *Hyperion*, Milton did better; what he tried to do in the odes, in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, in the *Eve of St. Agnes* and the *Eve of St. Mark*, diverse as these poems are to one another, no one has ever approached. He gave up *Hyperion* because he could not make it fit with his growing interests, and when, at Winchester, he examined it again, he was instantly conscious that this was no work for him. In saying to George: "I wish to devote myself to another verse alone," he is telling us all we need to know.

But why, my readers may ask, did Keats put no such definite ban on the evidently inferior *Vision*? The answer is that at least the *Vision* was an autochthonous utterance. This was the poem he had himself conceived and partly composed. Seeing it so, he felt it might not be impossible to resurrect and revise it, saving some of the

best parts of *Hyperion* by its means, but shearing them of the tang of archaism. As an illustration of what I mean, take the line of *Hyperion*:

"Came slope upon the threshold of the West."

This, in the *Vision*, is altered to the far simpler and less tortured:

"Is sloping to the threshold of the West."

Keats read, and liked, his description of the Temple of Saturn. Much excellent work accomplished in the past year had emboldened him to snap his fingers at the reviews. They could no longer worry him even to the extent of making him wish to write in a way which would be unassailable. He would write as he pleased and what he pleased. If he wrote the story of Hyperion at all, it should be done as his imagination dictated. The man who was to be the great precursor of modern poetry was beginning to know himself a little, and this knowledge taught him that erudite copies are no part of the equipment of a major poet.

There is much that might be said of both *Hyperion* and the *Vision*, but this is not the place for a comparative study of the two poems; space forbids, and we must return to the Woodhouse letter before the thread of it is quite lost.

Keats's criticism of himself is very interesting, and so is his comparison of the *Pot of Basil*, *Lamia* and the *Eve of St. Agnes*. I think no better description of the *Pot of Basil* has ever been made than his: "'A weak-sided Poem' with an amusing sober-sadness about it."

One point which he touches whimsically upon in his letter had in reality no whimsicality about it. He had not received any answers to the letters he had written Brown. His suspicious nature took serious alarm, which he expresses humorously enough, but which was nevertheless only half a joke. What on earth was the matter? Why did not

Brown answer? Brown was in Ireland, consummating his illegal marriage, but Keats was ignorant of that. He was particularly anxious to hear from Brown, as he wanted his opinion and agreement to the plan he mentions to Woodhouse, that of living in Westminster and doing hack-work for the magazines.

It was a plan which he had been gradually fixing upon ever since his return to Winchester, and the special why of it sprang from a fantastic sense of responsibility in regard to George. Here is Keats, hopelessly out of pocket, deeply in debt, definitely engaged to be married, and yet he feels it incumbent on him to say to his brother:

> "If I cannot remit you hundreds, I will tens, and if not that, ones . . . To this end I will devote whatever I may gain for a few years to come, at which period I must begin to think of a security for my own comfort, when quiet will become more pleasant to me than the world."

And, lest George should imagine that this entails a sacrifice, he adds:

> "In all this do never think of me as in any way unhappy: I shall not be so. I have a great pleasure in thinking of my responsibility to you, and shall do myself the greatest luxury if I can succeed in any way so as to be of assistance to you."

Under the circumstances, this attitude was bizarre, to say the least; and he seems not to have been quite candid in his explanation of the matter to Fanny Brawne, or she misunderstood the facts. But we shall come to this later.

So full was Keats of his plan, that, on this same Wednesday, he wrote again to Brown and also to Dilke. To the latter, he made a request. Would Dilke look up a lodging for him; he is determined to do "anything but Mortgage my Brain to Blackwood," and he is going to start immediately, for, he says with vigorous emphasis:

> "Wait for the issue of this Tragedy? No — there cannot be greater uncertainties east, west, north, and south than concerning dramatic composition. How many months must I wait! Had I not better look about me now? . . . I have no trust whatever on Poetry. I don't wonder at it — the marvel is to me how people read so much of it."

To Brown, Keats is positively wistful, detailing his reasons for his decision and begging his friend to approve of his plan. He goes into the facts, and his attitude toward them, much more fully than he does to Woodhouse or Dilke:

> "It is quite time I should set myself doing something, and live no longer upon hopes. I have never yet exerted myself. I am getting into an idle-minded, vicious way of life, almost content to live upon others. In no period of my life have I acted with any self-will but in throwing up the apothecary profession. That I do not repent of . . . I have not known yet what it is to be diligent. I purpose living in town in a cheap lodging, and endeavouring, for a beginning, to get the theatricals of some paper . . . Look on my side of the question. I am convinced I am right . . . And here I will take an opportunity of making a remark or two on our friendship, and on all your good offices to me. I have a natural timidity of mind in these matters; liking better to take the feeling between us for granted, than to speak of it. But, good God! what a short while you have known me! . . . You have been living for others more than any man I know . . . I had got into a habit of mind of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties. This very habit would be the parent of idleness and difficulties. You will see it as a duty I owe myself to break the neck of it. I do nothing for my subsistance — make no exertion. At the end of another year you shall applaud me, not for verses, but for conduct."

By Thursday, September twenty-third, Brown had returned from Ireland and gone to old Mr. Dilke's at Chichester, where he received four letters from Keats "all in a

lump." He explained his silence by the prevarication that he had left Bedhampton for Chichester while Keats was still directing to the former place.

Brown told Lord Houghton that the tone of Keats's letters brought him at once to Winchester, but his coming was not so immediate as to preclude his sending his uncandid explanation of the reason of his silence to Keats by letter. When he did come, however, he felt constrained to agree that Keats was wise in his decision to try and find some remunerative work, but he strenuously opposed the Westminster part of the scheme, alleging how much he should miss Keats from Wentworth Place. What arguments Keats used to persuade him, whether he hinted at the disturbing proximity of Fanny Brawne or not, we do not know. The part of his letter which seems to contain this information was carefully expunged by Brown before giving the letter to Lord Houghton. That he was brought round to Keats's way of thinking in the end, is evident from another letter to Dilke, written on Friday, October first. Here Keats says specifically: "I want you to hire me a couple of rooms (a Sitting Room and bed room for myself alone) in Westminster." Toward the end of the letter, he assures Dilke that he and Brown will "be returned by next Friday." On Sunday, he was so generous as to write to Haydon in answer to a letter from that gentleman accusing him of silence. Keats does not mention a syllable of Haydon's defection in not repaying the loan, but says nice things about his pictures, and asks him to try and procure a ticket to the British Museum, which, Keats assures him, he shall make better use of than he did "in the first instance." To Haydon, he says that he shall not be in Winchester "more than a Week more," but I think the date given to Dilke is probably the correct one to ascribe to his return. At any rate, on some day between the first and the tenth of October, Keats and Brown turned their backs on Winchester and hied them to London,

Brown to Hampstead, Keats to 25 College Street, Westminster, where Dilke had found him rooms according to specifications. Keats was in high spirits, his sore throat had temporarily gone, and he felt himself strong and girded for a great undertaking. A greater than he knew, poor fellow! With the closing of the Winchester chapter, life as he had known it hitherto came to an abrupt end.

## CHAPTER XII

### ILLNESS

The probabilities are in favour of its having been on Friday, October eighth, that Keats took possession of his College Street lodgings, and there is every likelihood that it was on the very next day, Saturday, that Severn dropped in to see him and welcome him back to town. Severn has recorded that, on this occasion, he found Keats in high spirits, full of energy and animation. Keats read *Hyperion* to him (evidently the Wentworth Place version, not the *Vision*), and he appears to have read it chiefly for the purpose of getting Severn's reaction to its style. Severn, who was an ardent Miltonian, "delighted immeasurably in 'Hyperion,'"[1] but said that Keats "seemed much more taken up with a rhymed story about a serpent-girl," which was, of course, *Lamia*. Severn praised *Hyperion* for its Miltonic flavour, which only served to confirm Keats in his opinion that he had been on the wrong tack in writing it. He told Severn succinctly that he did not want to write a poem "that might have been written by John Milton, but one that was unmistakably written by no other than John Keats."

On Sunday, Keats did the most natural thing in the world, he went out to Hampstead, and he and Fanny Brawne met once more. The meeting was decisive. The sorely tried girl was overjoyed to see her lover again, and was kindness itself to him. Even Keats could have no doubt of her love and constancy after the greeting she accorded him, and the very sight of her was enough to banish all his morbid intentions of weaning himself away from her. He simply fell head over heels in love with her again, or, to be more exact, his feeling for her, which he had been at such pains to smother with a host of other claims and im-

[1] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

portunities, rose swiftly to the surface once more, scattering every other interest to the four winds. To Keats, starved, lonely, troubled, the day was nothing short of divine. He came back to the empty lodgings at College Street in the evening and at once wrote a sonnet. This sonnet can have been no other than *The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone*, since it corresponds exactly to the sentiments he expressed in a note to Miss Brawne written the next day, Monday. Lord Houghton, in printing it, gave the date as "1819," and there cannot be the faintest doubt that its complete date is October tenth, 1819. Here is the sonnet:

"The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,
Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous waist!
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise —
Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday — or holinight
Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave
The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray."

Not among Keats's best sonnets — no, but certainly among the most pathetic that have ever been written. For a man of Keats's temperament to have gone off alone after such a day, was a terrible strain; and the quiet and noble way in which he faced his destiny was magnificent. His letter tells the same story, but in a somewhat more tempered form:

"My sweet Girl,

I am living today in yesterday: I was in a complete fascination all day. I feel myself at your mercy. Write me

ever so few lines and tell me you will never for ever be less kind to me than yesterday. — You dazzled me. There is nothing in the world so bright and delicate . . . When shall we pass a day alone? I have had a thousand kisses, for which with my whole soul I thank love — but if you should deny me the thousand and first — 'twould put me to the proof how great a misery I could live through . . . I have seen Mrs. Dilke this morning; she says she will come with me any fine day.

Ever yours
JOHN KEATS.

Ah hertè mine!"

There is no mention of the sonnet in this letter, which looks as though Keats did not send it to Miss Brawne. It said so much, too much for him to say to her, he may very well have thought. This was the early nineteenth century, remember; and Fanny Brawne was only just nineteen and a carefully nurtured girl of the straight-laced middle class. How scrupulously Keats guarded her innocence is evident in all his letters to her. Once only did he commit an indiscretion, and that was when illness had sapped both his judgment and his will.

Fanny Brawne immediately sent him the assurance he craved; it came two days later, while he was writing to her again. I do not propose to give any more of Keats's letters to Miss Brawne during this period than are absolutely necessary to a clear understanding of his situation, mental and physical. They can be read in full in Buxton Forman's editions. Certain extracts, however, I must give, and give with some completeness. This is a part of what he wrote on Wednesday, October thirteenth:

"MY DEAREST GIRL,

This moment I have set myself to copy some verses out fair. I cannot proceed with any degree of content. I must write you a line or two and see if that will assist in dismissing you from my Mind for ever so short a time. Upon my Soul I can think of nothing else. The time is passed when I

had power to advise and warn you against the unpromising morning of my Life. My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again — my Life seems to stop there — I see no further. You have absorb'd me. I have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving — I should be exquisitely miserable without the hope of soon seeing you. I should be afraid to separate myself far from you. My sweet Fanny, will your heart never change? My love, will it? I have no limit now to my love . . . Your note came in just here. I cannot be happier away from you. 'Tis richer than an Argosy of Pearles . . . You have ravish'd me away by a Power I cannot resist; and yet I could resist till I saw you; and even since I have seen you I have endeavoured often 'to reason against the reasons of my Love.' I can do so no more — the pain would be too great. My love is selfish. I cannot breathe without you.

Yours for ever
JOHN KEATS."

Keats, as I have tried to show in the last chapter, was in no state to bear undue excitement of any kind. His dread of the fever of composition was forcing itself upon his consciousness, and if the composition of poetry were a strain, what must the agitation of thwarted love have been. Yet, even thwarted, love had its comforts, and these he craved with his whole soul. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that no one living in such a mental turmoil was in a fit condition to tramp up and down the pavement of Grub Street seeking employment. All he could do, poor moth, was to flutter back to the proximity of his candle. On Friday, he journeyed to Hampstead again, and this time he made a stay of three days with Brown. Why Buxton Forman and Sir Sidney Colvin persist in believing that he stayed with the Brawnes, I cannot imagine, unless they derive their opinion from some source which I have not consulted. On Saturday, October sixteenth, he wrote to his sister. He dates the letter simply "Wentworth Place," but in it he says:

"I took lodgings in Westminster for the purpose of being in the reach of Books, but am now returned to Hampstead being induced to it by the habit I have acquired in this room I am now in and also from the pleasure of being free from paying any petty attentions to a diminutive housekeeping."

He had acquired no habit of being in any room at the Brawnes'. It is his old room at Brown's to which he refers. The reasons given to his sister were not his real reasons, however much he may have tried to induce himself to believe in their importance; but they were very likely the reasons he adduced to Brown, who was only too glad to get him back on any terms. He does not seem to have told Fanny Brawne of his change of plan while he was at Hampstead, yet he appears to have contemplated it before going out. He even seems to have paid off his College Street landlady after a week under her roof, for, when he went back to town, he put up with the Dilkes in Great Smith Street; at least, it was from there that he wrote to Fanny Brawne on Tuesday morning. In this letter, we see Keats determined upon his course, but rather miserably aware of what that course entailed:

"My sweet Fanny,

On awaking from my three days dream ('I cry to dream again') I find one and another astonish'd at my idleness and thoughtlessness. I was miserable last night — the morning is always restorative. I must be busy, or try to be so. I have several things to speak to you of tomorrow morning. Mrs. Dilke I should think will tell you that I purpose living at Hampstead. I must impose chains upon myself. I shall be able to do nothing. I should like to cast the die for Love or death. I have no Patience with anything else . . . my mind is in a tremble, I cannot tell what I am writing.

Ever my love yours
John Keats."

The tenor of this letter means that Keats was profoundly disappointed with himself. He believed that he was spinelessly allowing himself to follow the line of least resistance, that he was permitting the immediate necessity he felt to be near Miss Brawne to unnerve him from doing the only thing which could bring them permanently together. He saw himself playing the sentimental fool instead of getting up and going about his work like a sensible fellow. He saw his grandiloquent purpose of being self-supporting vanish from him like an ever more distantly floating soap-bubble, while all he did was to stand agape, enraptured by its iridescent colours. But here Keats did himself a gross injustice. It was not Fanny Brawne, it was not even love, which kept him inert during these days. It was his health. He did not march boldly into the offices of one or another newspaper and request a job at reviewing a play, or set his pen to scratching over paper at something which was, if nothing else, at any rate saleable. Little fitted as he was for tasks like these, he might at least have made a try at them. It was his health which kept him quiescent. He simply could not do what he had planned; he had not the strength. He had exhausted himself with his Summer's work. The poetic urge which had kept him up through the Winchester days might have held out a little longer if he had not so soon touched the fire of renewed sexual passion, I freely admit that. But he had touched it, and under the circumstances probably the wisest course for him to pursue was the one he took. His waning energy could not have been triumphant for very long, in any case, and we may be very sure that it could never have survived any attempt at work which was not poetry.

It is quite natural that his friends, who understood nothing, neither the force of his love, nor the devastating effect of his disease, who did not, indeed, realize the presence of disease at all, should have been "astonish'd" at finding all his vigorous talk spend itself in melancholy brooding. It

was they, and their astonishment, which did him harm. His only hope lay in peace and idleness, and they urged him to fresh endeavour. It was this terrible, goading astonishment which heralded his first hæmorrhage.

Keats's illness was dual in kind. He had pulmonary tuberculosis and laryngeal tuberculosis. The former had not yet shown itself by any symptoms which Keats had detected; the latter had been in evidence for two years, but the doctors whom Keats had consulted had failed to recognize it. If my readers will turn back to Chapter VI, and read once more Dr. Hawes's[1] letter on the subject, they will understand the situation perfectly and realize how very long it was since Keats had been a well man. Accredited apothecary and surgeon though he was, he failed to read his own symptoms correctly, and scourged himself for his want of moral purpose when he might more justly have plumed himself on having kept at work so long. To add the last straw to his general debility, he suddenly gave up eating animal food, in order, he tells his sister Fanny, "that my brains may never henceforth be in a greater mist than is theirs by nature." No more mistaken course could have been adopted, nor one more speedily calculated to bring his fate upon him.

Keats probably returned to Hampstead at once. His going back to Westminster at all was undoubtedly for some practical reason like seeing Abbey, or getting his luggage, what there was of it, which he may have deposited at the Dilkes' on giving up his lodgings.

We have no more letters from Keats for a month, but certain side winds have blown us a little information concerning the interval. One of these emanates from Severn, who gets his dates wrong, since he appears to be referring to the Sunday a week after his call at College Street, which cannot possibly be the case. On the other hand, it is extremely likely that the Sunday he speaks of was the first

[1] See Vol. I, p. 514.

after Keats's definite return to Wentworth Place. Severn, on the Sunday in question, went out to Hampstead to see Keats again, on which occasion he found him "well neither in mind nor in body, with little of the happy confidence and resolute bearing of a week earlier; while alternating moods of apathetic dejection and spasmodic gaiety rendered him a companion somewhat difficult to humour."[1]

However violent Keats's struggle with himself may have been, however tantalizing and over-exciting he may have found his constant intercourse with Fanny Brawne, we cannot but see that, of a choice of evils, living close to her at Brown's was the lesser, for he began to write almost as soon as he was settled in his old quarters. *Otho* was still being copied by the indefatigable Brown, and the friends had every hope of placing it at Drury Lane as soon as it was ready to submit to the powers who ruled the destinies of that theatre. So strong were their hopes of it, that it seemed to the two young men that Keats could not do better than to start on another play at once. Brown told the story of Keats's second attempt at drama writing to Lord Houghton in these words:

> [2] "As soon as Keats had finished 'Otho the Great,' I pointed out to him a subject for an English historical tragedy in the reign of Stephen, beginning with his defeat by the Empress Maud and ending with the death of his son Eustace. He was struck with the variety of events and characters which must necessarily be introduced, and I offered to give, as before, their dramatic conduct. 'The play must open,' I began, 'with the field of battle, when Stephen's forces are retreating' — 'Stop,' he cried, 'I have been too long in leading strings; I will do all this myself.' He immediately set about it, and wrote two or three scenes."

Sir Sidney Colvin thinks that Brown's suggestion was

[1] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.
[2] Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

made, and the "two or three scenes" (actually four) written, in Winchester, but that he is in error here seems evident from the fact that the manuscript, of which five folio leaves are in Keats's handwriting and three quarto leaves in Brown's,[1] is carefully dated by Brown "Nov. 1819." Moreover there is in existence a copy of Selden's *Titles of Honour*,[2] purchased by Keats in 1819, clearly in order to have constantly by him a reference book as to the usages, civil and military, of the period. Surely, if Keats had been at such pains to inform himself on the subject in Winchester, some of his letters from there, full of his work as they are, would have mentioned it, and none of them do. On the flyleaves of this volume, Keats started a methodical index to speed his labours, and that he intended to refer to it frequently we see by his having re-numbered various pages which are wrongly numbered in the text. Buxton Forman owned this book, but seems not to have understood its connection with the fragment of *King Stephen*. I owe my realization of it to my friend, Professor John Livingston Lowes, who made the important discovery one evening at my house when we were examining the book.

Keats's annotations, which are few, are all in Chapter V, which deals with the English titles of Lords, etc. These annotations, meagre as they are, are very interesting. For instance, it was probably as a guide for certain possible speeches that Keats marked: "for in those times the affectation of making words out of that little Greek they had was frequent here in England." We find him indexing "Atheling" and "Reliefs," under which latter heading we read this important pointer: "An Earl's Relief is eight Horse, four saddled and four unsaddled, four Helms, four Coats of Mail, four Spears, as many Shields, four Swords, CC [two hundred] Marks of Gold." Keats underscored a long passage descriptive of the word "Bel-

[1] Buxton Forman. [2] Author's Collection.

house," and he also annotated the suggestive words: "Deo & beato Æthelwoldo." As to matters directly bearing upon King Stephen, there is on page 536 a passage which reads: "Neither is this Charter against those that say King Stephen created him. The Civil Warrs of that time are well known. And this Lord being sometimes of the Queen's part, sometimes of King Stephen's, was created, it seems, by both as some others were." Here Keats has underlined: "was created, it seems, by both as some others were," and put a cross against it in the margin.[1]

It is not only in the scored passages that we find references which might have been valuable to Keats; but we must not expect, in the very short fragment which is all that Keats wrote of the play, to find these references in direct use. Keats apparently intended to employ the volume both as a dictionary and a creator of atmosphere. One direct allusion we do find, however; it derives from two unannotated passages which are to this effect — the first is in reference to King Stephen's crown: "King Stephen also in both [seal and coins], hath only a like Crown fleurie"; the second speaks of the titles, "Duke of Cornwal and Earl of Chester," as sometimes given with that of Prince of Wales. Now, in Scene I of *King Stephen*, Keats wrote:

> "Not twenty Earls of Chester shall browbeat
> The diadem."

In *King Stephen*, Keats was plainly imitating Shakespeare in his historical plays. Not intentionally, we may be sure, but because, in dealing with such a subject in such a form, his mind fell naturally into the attitude and cadences of the poet whose work in the *genre* he had studied with such care. Keats had managed to free himself from imitation in his poems, but drama was too new a vehicle for him to have tracked his own way in it as yet. Still *King Stephen*, in spite of its too slavish adherence to a model,

[1] For complete list of annotations, see Appendix C.

has much beauty, and the model itself was far more indigenous to Keats than Milton's *Paradise Lost* had been. The first three scenes are really extraordinarily good. In a half-a-dozen speeches, Keats establishes a distinct character for his Stephen; and the Duke of Glocester, although drawn with a slighter line, stamps himself as a man and not an effigy. The bustle and shock of battle is excellently given, and however one may regret the fact that Keats conceived his play as a thing of echoes, one must admit that the echoes are superlatively well done. Is not this good?

> "Now may we lift our bruised vizors up,
> And take the flattering freshness of the air,
> While the wide din of battle fades away
> Into times past."

Or this?

> ". . . He sole and lone maintains
> A hopeless bustle mid our swarming arms,
> And with a nimble savageness attacks."

Or this again:

> "He shames our victory. His valour still
> Keeps elbow-room amid our eager swords."

Yes, there is much excellence here; but, after all, Keats is writing to a pattern, even if the pattern would have perfectly suited him had he been his own great-great-grandfather. For, as has often been pointed out, Keats and Shakespeare are cousins german in their poetic points of view, however much the older poet surpassed the younger. It is a curious commentary on Keats's natural diction when in the heat of his story that the lines:

> "Another sword! And what if I could seize
> One from Bellona's gleaming armoury,"

were originally written:

> "Another Sword! for one short minute longer
> That I might pepper that De Kaims."

There is a marked falling off in the Fourth Scene, laid in Queen Maud's Presence Chamber. We feel that Keats approached it with a flagging interest; and with the scene the fragment ends.

We may urge our perspicacity to its utmost, and speculate among various even chances, as to just why Keats abandoned his play then and there. The reasons so evoked — inability to face the imaginative strain imposed by a long play, insufficiency of atmosphere in Selden to provoke his inventive faculty, a scene laid in a period too remote for intimacy, not remote enough for romance, a sudden change of mood, the realization that he was extremely ignorant of the technique of dramatic composition — are all cogent, but none of them seem decisive. Probably there was a little of all of them in his action. At any rate, the play remained a fragment.

With the breaking down of *King Stephen*, Brown found himself once more at a loss as to what to suggest which would interest his friend and at the same time have a bearing on the exchequer, and he could not help seeing that it must be something which Keats could do without too much mental strain and with no emotional exactions whatever. He himself delighted in fairy stories, and both he and Keats were possessed of keen senses of humour. Satire, humour, and fairies — what a piquant combination! Lord Byron had just swept the reading world off its feet with the audacities of *Don Juan*. Why should not Keats dash off a potboiler in the form of a joke, which would be a lark to write, and might — just might, mind you — tickle the public fancy, and put some convenient guineas into Keats's empty pockets? How much of this he told Keats, we do not know, probably not all. But he could not help seeing

that Keats's real work was not getting on, and he may very well have urged his scheme as a relief and antithesis. Of the circumstances of the genesis and composition of the *Cap and Bells*, Brown wrote:

> [1] "By chance our conversation turned on the idea of a comic faery poem in the Spenser stanza, and I was glad to encourage it. He had not composed many stanzas before he proceeded in it with spirit. It was to be published under the feigned authorship of *Lucy Vaughan Lloyd* and to bear the title of the *Cap and Bells*, or, which he preferred, *The Jealousies*. This occupied his mornings pleasantly. He wrote it with the greatest facility; in one instance I remember having copied (for I copied as he wrote) as many as twelve stanzas before dinner."

When Lord Houghton printed the poem in 1848, he appended to it a note by Brown which reads:

> "This Poem was written subject to future amendments and omissions: it was begun without a plan, and without any prescribed laws for the supernatural machinery."

Here was Keats, then, during the first weeks of November, spending his mornings with Brown in the sitting-room which opened on the garden, writing the *Cap and Bells* easily and with the utmost speed; and passing his evenings alone in his own study, forcing himself to the revision of the *Vision of Hyperion*, changing certain passages culled out of *Hyperion* with little dexterity, putting down a word, scratching it out, trying for lines, for a continuation which would not come, cudgelling his brains for a subject which should free him from his paralysing lassitude, eternally obsessed with the thought of his apparently hopeless future where marriage was concerned — doing all these things, but most of the time doing nothing but suffer —

[1] Quoted from *The Poems of John Keats*, edited by E. de Sélincourt. The passage also appears in Sir Sidney Colvin's short *Life of Keats*. English Men of Letters Series.

suffer — suffer — at the terrible inertia he could neither shake off nor rise above.

If Keats were at a stand in his serious work, the *Cap and Bells*, on the other hand, flowed with remarkable swiftness, and at first he seemed to get a great deal of amusement from it. There are eighty-eight stanzas in the fragment of the *Cap and Bells*, but at the rate at which Brown reports Keats as writing it, that would represent only a little over a week's work. But the *Cap and Bells* was as powerless to chain his wandering attention as *King Stephen* had been. He did not definitely abandon it, even so late as the following August he seems to have had hopes of going on with it; but, the first rush of enthusiasm over, he began to weary and question, and wonder whether he had not better fish round for another large subject which would stimulate his serious imagination. On Wednesday, November seventeenth, he wrote to Taylor of a new theme which he thought might do. He says:

> "I have come to a determination not to publish anything I have now ready written; but for all that to publish a Poem before long and that I hope to make a fine one. As the marvellous is the most enticing and the surest guarantee of harmonious numbers I have been endeavouring to persuade myself to untether Fancy and to let her manage for herself. I and myself cannot agree about this at all. Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst Men and women. I would rather read Chaucer than Ariosto. The little dramatic skill I may as yet have however badly it might show in a Drama would I think be sufficient for a Poem. I wish to diffuse the colouring of St. Agnes eve throughout a poem in which Character and Sentiment would be the figures to such drapery. Two or three such Poems, if God should spare me, written in the course of the next six years, would be a famous gradus ad Parnassum altissimum. I mean they would nerve me up to the writing of a few fine Plays — my greatest ambition — when I do feel ambitious. I am sorry to say that is very seldom. The subject we have once or twice talked of ap-

pears a promising one, the Earl of Leicester's history. I am this morning reading Holingshed's Elizabeth. You had some Books awhile ago, you promised to lend me, illustrative of my subject. If you can lay hold of them or any others which may be serviceable to me I know you will encourage my low-spirited muse by sending them — or rather by letting me know when our Errand cart Man shall call with my little Box. I will endeavour to set my self selfishly at work on this Poem that is to be."

But he could not set himself to work on any such large undertaking. He was undoubtedly right in thinking his dramatic skill insufficient for a play, and wisely critical in believing that a dramatic poem might be within his compass, and yet, when one considers along what line, or lines, Keats's creative faculty most naturally and happily moved, one is inclined to doubt even that. One cannot but fail to see that the tether of history would have been a severe handicap to an imagination such as his. It is no matter either way, for Keats did nothing with the Earl of Leicester's history. No least scrap of any such poem has ever come to light. Keats had no longer the vitality to do more than work over poems already written, or possibly, from time to time, add a stanza or two to the *Cap and Bells*.

Keats lovers hitherto have been of one mind in their condemnation of the *Cap and Bells*. To Rossetti, it was "the to me hateful Cap and Bells."[1] Buxton Forman considered it "entirely unworthy of Keats" and "a mere intellectual and mechanical exercise." Sir Sidney Colvin thinks that for Keats such a subject was "essentially against the grain," and Professor de Sélincourt points out "how unsuitable the subject and treatment are to the essential character of his own genius." But are they? It seems to me that these devoted gentlemen are all determined to ignore one side of their idol. Immensely delighting in Keats's

[1] Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

lyric gift, they turn their eyes resolutely away from that other part of him which revelled in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, enjoyed the broad satire of *Guzman de Alfarache*, and copied Brown's decidedly coarse tales at great length in his letters to George and Rice. Satire is seldom an attribute of youth, and that Keats was only on the threshold of this corner of his poetic domain, is true. But that he would have penetrated farther in this direction had he lived, it is impossible to doubt. Even Sir Sidney Colvin, on the last page of his *Life of Keats*, suggests this important query — his paragraph in full reads:

> "Again, along with his admirable capacity for loyal devotion and sympathy in friendship, we find in him capacities of quite another kind, capacities for disillusionment and for seeing through and chafing at human and social shams and pretensions and absurdities; and we ask ourselves, would this strain in him, which we find expressed with a degree of pettish and premature cynicism, for instance in the *Cap and Bells* and in some of his later letters, have matured in time into a power either of virile satire or genial reconciling comedy?"

Against the chorus of disapproval which his immediate descendants have fairly shouted over the *Cap and Bells*, it is strange to find a sympathetic word accorded to the poem from his contemporary, Lord Jeffrey, who, in a letter to Lord Houghton, after the publication of the latter's collected edition in 1848, wrote of the "strange outbursts of individual fancy and felicitous expressions in the 'Cap and Bells' though the general extravagance of the poetry is more suited to an Italian than to an English taste."[1]

Recent criticism has turned more favourable eyes on the *Cap and Bells*. We now see the poem as another of Keats's many experiments, and a very interesting one; and we recognize in it not only the rudiments of political and social

[1] Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

satire, but an arrow pointing to Keats's multifarious reading along many lines, some of which we knew of, but some of which may very possibly have been overlooked.

Keats undoubtedly took the main incident of his tale from the fairy episode in the *Midsummer Night's Dream.* Sir Sidney Colvin couples this with Southey's translation of Wieland's *Oberon*, which is very likely true, although we have no knowledge of Keats's having read that work. Besides these two sources, there was another ready to Keats's hand in the current gossip of the day, and the newspapers, both daily and weekly. England was just at this time buzzing with the quarrel between the Prince Regent and his wife, the unfortunate, and self-banished, Princess of Wales, in a few months to be the returned, but uncrowned, Queen Caroline.

Had one unlimited space and all the time in the world at one's disposal, it would be amusing to trace Keats's various indebtednesses throughout the *Cap and Bells*, which has never been thoroughly done. As it is, we can merely glance at a few examples. Keats took the Spenserian stanza precisely because of its unsuitability for comic verse. This audacious act has called down upon him a whole hurricane of sighs from generations of shocked classicists; yet that he managed his intractable medium with much skill, cannot be denied by any one who has read the poem with an unprejudiced mind. But his stanza was not the only thing which Keats got from Spenser; he filched his fairy king directly from the Tenth Book of the Second Canto of the *Faery Queene*, where Spenser gives a genealogy of the fairy sovereigns, one of whom is "noble Elfinan." From Spenser too, Keats received the idea of placing his fairy realm in India, and calling its capital city Panthea. But Keats's Panthea hovers in the air, which Spenser's does not; for this attribute of the fairy Emperor's capital, Keats went to Drayton,[1] who, in the *Nymphidea* tells of

[1] *Shakespeare and Keats*, by Claude L. Finney.

the palace of "that proud Fairy King, Oberon," which, he says

> ". . . standeth in the air,
> By necromancy placed there,
> That it no tempests needs to fear
> Which way soe'er it blow it.

When we come to the publisher Parpaglion and the alchemist and soothsayer Hum, we find Keats borrowing from various of Ben Jonson's plays. Not only is the curious name Hum found in the *Alchemist*, where it is used as a cabalistic word by Subtle in an injunction to Dapper:

> ". . . cry hum
> Thrise,"

but Keats seems to have taken his "Scarab Street" from the same source, for Subtle calls Face "Scarabe," as a term of opprobrium. Miss Yvonne Dusser, who wrote a most interesting letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, some years ago, from which I have taken this detail, quotes from Greene's *Planetomachia* the following pertinent sentence: "the baze minds of such as with the Scarab Flye, delighteth only to live in dung and mire," to which Miss Dusser adds: "Scarab Street thus seems a fit dwelling place for the publisher Parpaglion, a scandal-monger." Miss Dusser also notes that Ben Jonson "uses the word 'hum' to satirize the talk of the puritans," and, considering that Keats's Hum aids and abets the Fairy Elfinan in his illicit love affair with a mortal, the derivation seems obvious.

It is also likely that Keats invented Crafticant's name with Jonson's Dame Purecraft from *Bartholomew Fair* in mind, and much of the alchemistical lore hinted at when the page, Eban, goes to Hum's house, points to the *Alchemist* and very probably also to Chaucer in the *Chanones Yemannes Tale*. Besides these sources, there is a chance

that Keats had happened across some old volumes of alchemy and astrology. For references to the latter science, he had not only the poets, but *Moore's Almanack*, which is mentioned in the poem.

Being somewhat interested in the possible sources of Keats's alchemical terms, apart from their literary derivations, I asked my friend Mr. S. Foster Damon,[1] who has made a study of these things, to note them for me. His answer to my request gave the following:

> "Hum, one presumes, is an alchemist on account of his 'furnace-scorched brow' (Stanza LVII); but what alchemical terms he uses are more easily explained otherwise, and are so generally in use that it would be impossible to trace them to any definite source.
>
> *Aqua vitæ* (Stanza XXXIII) is a common alchemical term, meaning (1) the First Matter or (2) the Medicine prepared from the First Matter; but from the 16th century on it had been commonly applied to any form of ardent spirits prepared for drink.
>
> *Nitre* (Stanza XXXIII) is another word for salt-peter, common in alchemy, equally common in medicine.
>
> *Venus* (Stanza XXXIV) means copper in alchemy, but is here used astrologically.
>
> *Mercury* (Stanza LXIX) means quick-silver in alchemy, but is here used astrologically as the Protecting Influence over Thieves (this idea goes back to Greek mythology).
>
> These are all the terms which could possibly be interpreted alchemically; but Keats probably used them quite otherwise.
>
> There are several other astrological terms: "cast a quiet figure" (Stanza XXXII) means to draw up a (quiet) horoscope. The *chalk* (Stanza XXXIII) was for this purpose. *Stars and Zodiac* (Stanza XXXIII) are astrological. Other occult terms are gathered haphazard.
>
> *Zendervester* is the Zend Avesta (Stanza II).
>
> *Grains of Paradise* (Stanza XXXIII) were cardamon seeds, used in medicine as spice — mentioned by Chaucer and everyone after him.

[1] Author of *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*. 1924.

*Don't tell me what you want* (Stanza XXXVI) — a common trick of ancient magicians and modern seers. Vulgarly considered a test of supernatural powers when they can tell themselves. See in the Bible, the second chapter of the Book of Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar planned to execute all the seers because they could not tell him the dream he had forgotten.

I do not know what coming down stairs backwards in one shoe means (Stanza XXXIV) — it sounds like a charlatan's trick. (Note reference to Mother Goose: 'Diddle-diddle dumpling'.)"

Yes, Keats went merrily to Mother Goose; and to hints of folk medical practices, in his "*dentes sapientiæ* of mice." Another interesting letter to the *Times*[1] goes at length into the prevalence of the use of mice as medical ingredients. The author, Mr. Donald A. Mackenzie,[2] says very pertinently: "It may be that the poet heard something, during his wanderings, about the Highland mouse cures . . . He may have heard that the teeth of mice were worn as charms . . . As mouse cures were as prevalent in England as in Scotland, it is possible, of course, that Keats may have heard of them from some rural patient in a London Hospital." Various parts of mice were used in these cures; but the importance of that rodent's "wisdom teeth" seems to have been Keats's own happy invention.

For the political references in the *Cap and Bells*, Buxton Forman gives a few illustrations. He identifies the "square-cut chancellor" with Mr. Vansittart, and the "tiptoe marquis" with the Marquis of Lansdowne; but the most amusing of his discoveries is that which refers to "Esquire Biancopany." Keats's wit was delightfully employed in inventing his name, for Buxton Forman splits it into "Bianco — white, pane — bread," and proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is Mr. Whitbread, a violent rad-

[1] *Times Literary Supplement*, February 14, 1918.
[2] Author of *Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe.*

ical, and an ardent adherent of the maligned Princess of Wales.

The *Cap and Bells* is not so sparkling a skit as it ought to have been, and would have been had Keats been his normal self when he wrote it. Still, it is far from dull reading; the night flight, recorded in Crafticant's diary, is extremely ingenious, while the description of the black slave, Eban, admiring himself and his gorgeous clothes reflected in the "pearl-pav'd street" is quite irresistible. Keats is even witty at his own expense. The poet who can make fun of his own work is a very great poet indeed, and one blessed with an infinite sense of humour. Such a poet also knows that his serious work is unassailable. It implies no doubt of his *Eve of St. Mark* that he here treats it to a little gentle fooling by making Elfinan in love with a certain Bertha Pearl who lives in Canterbury. Among other sly digs at his real poem, Hum gives the Emperor a "legend-laden" book to take to Bertha, the sight of which is guaranteed to send her into a fainting fit at once.

Viewed with unbiased eyes, the *Cap and Bells* is often clever and occasionally brilliant; but the most remarkable thing about it is that Keats, suffering and miserable as he was, could have written it at all, could have written anything in such a vein, and yet it was just this vein which kept him going. It turned his mind to merry things and kept it there during the hours of composition. But the time came, and, as we have seen, in a very few days, when he could no longer make the effort to free himself from himself. Every unproductive day showed him more plainly the coil which was weaving round him. He could not hope to marry without money, he could not get money unless he worked, and he could not work. I think, too, there is ample evidence to prove that Keats was beginning to fear that he was the victim of disease. His mother and Tom had both died of tuberculosis, and it would have been strange if the thought that he too might go the same way

had not entered his head. But I do not think that at this time it had. I believe rather that he was not sure what he had. The doctors, when he consulted them about his throat as he was frequently forced to do, made no such suggestion, and he could hardly, with his inexperience of actual practice, believe them totally wrong. Yet the thought of death hung constantly over him. A man in health does not say to his publisher that he will do thus and thus, if God should spare him. As the days went on, he sank lower and lower into gloom and dreary forebodings. But, since George's departure and Tom's death, he had lost the habit of easing himself of his griefs by talking about them. He could not speak, even to Brown; and Fanny Brawne was the last person to whom he could tell his fears in such a case, naturally.

Brown has left an account of these miserable days as they appeared to him. He speaks of Keats's inability to work, of his penniless condition, of the blighting of all his hopes. Brown did his best to comfort, but what could he really do except lend his friend money, which he had done and continued doing at intervals. Here is a part of what he wrote concerning this time:

> [1] "All that a friend could say, or offer, or urge was not enough to heal his many wounds. He listened, and, in kindness, or soothed by kindness, showed tranquility, but nothing from a friend could relieve him, except on a matter of inferior trouble. He was too thoughtful or too unquiet; and he began to be reckless of health. Among other proofs of recklessness, he was secretly taking, at times, a few drops of laudanum to keep up his spirits. It was discovered by accident, and without delay revealed to me. He needed not to be warned of the danger of such a habit; but I rejoiced at his promise never to take another drop without my knowledge; for nothing could induce him to break his word when once given, — which was a difficulty. Still, at the very moment of my being rejoiced, this was an additional proof of his rooted misery."

[1] Quoted in Sir Sidney Colvin's *Life of Keats*.

It was doubtless of this period that Haydon was speaking when he told his obvious lie — a lie sprung from his immoral and incurable habit of exaggeration — of Keats's flying to dissipation as a relief. "For six weeks," says Haydon, "he was scarcely sober"; an absolute untruth, as we have Brown's testimony to prove. Such a thing, had it been true, could not have been kept from Mrs. Brawne and Fanny, in the close intimacy in which the two households lived. And is it likely that Mrs. Brawne would have permitted, or Fanny desired, the engagement to continue under such circumstances? A man can hide the fact that he is taking mild doses of laudanum; but a drunken man under one's roof, even with the precaution of separate front doors, is something which very soon proclaims itself.

The worst torture of Keats's condition was his growing jealousy of Fanny Brawne. One of the secondary symptoms of tuberculosis is a tendency to suspicion; and Keats had always been of a suspicious nature. Now he had no sensible George, no understanding Tom, to reason him out of his false impressions. He was not yet so ill that he could not keep himself from blaming Fanny Brawne to Brown. He suffered alone and in silence, but he suffered with a fearful intensity. Two poems appear to belong to this period — must, indeed, belong to it, for he does not seem to have written any poems after his first hæmorrhage. Both these poems tell the same story.

The first, known as *Lines to Fanny*, if we may take Lord Houghton's date, "October, 1819," as correct, must have been written shortly after his return to Hampstead. Buxton Forman attributes it to the College Street week, because in Keats's letter from there to Miss Brawne, written on October thirteenth, he tells her that he has just been copying some verses out fair. But this I am sure is a mistake. The letter is written in no such disconsolate mood as the poem, and in the poem Keats says that he has seen Miss Brawne only an hour before, which he certainly had not done on October thirteenth, nor even on the twelfth,

nor the eleventh, and it could not have been written on the tenth, when he wrote *The day is gone*, for the mood of the *Lines* is utterly at variance with the mood of the sonnet, and that the latter mood held, the letter of the eleventh proves. Yet the *Lines* must have been written quite soon after he came back to Wentworth Place, for, although there is dejection in them, there is no bitterness.

Quite unlike the *Lines*, is the terrible sonnet *To Fanny*, which begins:

> "I cry your mercy — pity — love! aye, love!
> Merciful love that tantalizes not."

This sonnet is all bitterness, and longing, agonizing, fevered love. He cries to Fanny:

> "Yourself — your soul — in pity give me all,
> Withhold no atom's atom or I die,
> Or living on perhaps, your wretched thrall,
> Forget, in the mist of idle misery,
> Life's purposes, — the palate of my mind
> Losing its gust, and my ambition blind!"

The last two lines here seem to date the sonnet as having been written in mid-November.

A fragment of seven and a half lines is jotted down on one of the pages of the *Cap and Bells*.[1] It is one of the bitterest of all Keats's personal expressions. Here is the constant, haunting thought of death, here is the profound distrust of Fanny Brawne, and here is something worse than either — the tortured man imagining, and almost glad to imagine, an anguish of remorse for the woman he loves. To appreciate Keats's agony, one must know these lines:

> "This living hand, now warm and capable
> Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
> And in the icy silence of the tomb,
> So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights

[1] The poem is written upside down on the page which contains Stanza LI. As the sheet is octavo, there is no room for more writing on the page.

That thou would[st] wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calm'd — see here it is —
I hold it toward you."

A tentative suggestion made by Sir Sidney Colvin is that these lines may have been a fragment of the projected drama on the Earl of Leicester, but considering what we know of Keats's state of mind at this time, the idea is, I think, quite untenable.[1]

Sir Sidney Colvin thinks that it did not occur to Keats as possible that "at the present ebb-tide of his fortunes," he "might win peace by marriage with the object of his passion." I think nothing else occurred to him day and night. The fact that the Brawne family had enough to live on comfortably, leads Sir Sidney to remark of Fanny: "What his instincts of honour and independence forbade him to ask, hers of tenderness could perhaps hardly be expected to offer." But it was Mrs. Brawne's money, not Fanny's; and is it to be supposed that any sensible mother (unless, indeed, she were supersensible and possessed of the prophesying powers of a Sibyl) would have suggested, or permitted her daughter to suggest, such a mad thing? They could not know that John Keats, living next door, was one of the greatest of English poets. What they saw was a penniless young man, in a very indifferent state of health. Fanny was only nineteen and Keats hardly twenty-four, and Mrs. Brawne cannot but have thought that there was plenty of time to think of marriage in a few years, the moment was most unpropitious, the young couple would be in a better position later on, in all probability. Also, Fanny lived in an age when well-brought-up daughters in her class of life did not jump over the traces and marry offhand; and suppose Fanny had happened to do this, neither

[1] Since the above was put in type, I have seen the holograph manuscript of this page of the *Cap and Bells*, which proves conclusively that the lines were written before Keats had composed Stanza LII.

she nor Keats had the money to run away, and was it to be contemplated that Fanny should move next door and let Brown support the pair of them! The idea is absurd. Fanny was not Harriet Westbrook, and Keats was no Shelley. They each did the best they could, as I think any one not hoodwinked by an unreasoning love for Keats can see.

Notwithstanding his misery, Keats made a brave attempt to keep up in the face of the world, his world of friends and acquaintances who did not see him so constantly as to suspect his condition. Sir Sidney Colvin entirely misreads a letter to Severn, written on Monday morning, December sixth. In this letter, Keats tells Severn that he is coming round soon to see his picture, the *Cave of Despair*, and at the end, with a touch of his old humour which did not quite desert him when speaking to outsiders until the very end, he asks Severn to come with him to see a poem which he has hung up in the Lecture Room of the Surrey Institution in competition for a prize, and adds:

> "I have many Rivals — the most threatening are An Ode to Lord Castlereagh, and a new series of Hymns for the New, new Jerusalem Chapel. You had best put me into your Cave of despair."

Keats's postulate does not refer to his real state of mind, as Sir Sidney supposes, he is merely carrying on the joke of the prize poem with a mock fear at such formidable rivals. I make this point simply to show that he was not in the habit of making a confidant of Severn.

While Keats's inner life was undergoing such throes, while to himself he was engulfed in a passionate tragedy, his outward life was calm enough. Brown had finished his fair transcript of *Otho the Great*, and taken it to Elliston, the manager of Drury Lane, and Elliston had accepted it with a proviso: he could not bring it out until the following season. This was very disagreeable news for Keats and Brown, particularly as Kean had postponed his journey to

America until the next year. There was some delay in the final decision, and during that time the young men nerved themselves to deliver an ultimatum. The tragedy must be brought out that season or they would offer it to Covent Garden, in the hope that Macready would take the chief part. In spite of Keats's great preference for Kean, he wrote to Rice that "'Twould do one's heart good to see Macready in Ludolph." Having arrived at this opinion, Keats at once set about improving the play. On Monday, December twentieth, he wrote to his sister that he had been very busy and should be for some time "preparing some Poems to come out in the Spring, and also in brightening the interest of our Tragedy." But Elliston was adamant, the young men took back their play, and there all knowledge of it ceases. Probably Covent Garden refused it, for, as I have already mentioned, it was never produced.

From this letter to Fanny, it is evident that Keats's determination not to publish any of the poems he had on hand, expressed in his letter to Taylor of November seventeenth, had been over-ruled, and a new volume decided upon. If Keats did any work during January, it was probably confined to a revision of his old poems.

Keats tells his sister an amusing little anecdote in this letter which must be given in his own words:

> "My hopes of success in the literary world are now better than ever. Mr. Abbey, on my calling on him lately, appeared anxious I should apply myself to something else — He mentioned Tea Brokerage. I supposed he might perhaps mean to give me the Brokerage of his concern which might be executed with little trouble and a good profit; and therefore said I should have no objection to it, especially as at the same time it occurred to me that I might make over the business to George — I questioned him about it a few days after. His mind takes odd turns. When I became a Suitor he became coy. He did not seem so much inclined to serve me. He described what I should have to do in the progress of business. It will not suit me. I have given it up."

What Abbey probably had in mind was that Keats should become a travelling salesman for the London trade, what was, and probably still is, called in England, a "town traveller." The picture of Keats driving up and down London and the near-by suburbs in a gig, purveying samples of tea, is a strange one, as Abbey doubtless realized when he came to think it over. And yet I think it was, in some sort, a moral lack in Keats that he, up to his eyes in debt, did not at least try what he could do with the job. His health is his only excuse, and we may make it for him; it was enough. Still, it must be admitted that, as regards his finances, Keats's sense of honour and justice was too often in abeyance. He disliked obligation, but consented to it rather than alter his mode of life a tittle.

By the middle of December, Keats's throat was again giving trouble, and following his doctor's advice he had "a warm great coat" made and provided himself with thick shoes. Useless precautions! The throat which, he says, "on exertion or cold continually threatens me" got no better.

Christmas came and went. Keats dined on Christmas Day with the Dilkes, in company, we may presume, with the Brawnes. Suddenly, early in January, George appeared in London. Whether or not he had heralded his coming by a letter to Keats or Mrs. Wylie, no one says, but it seems likely that he had, for Mrs. Wylie had had a letter from him in the middle of December. Heralded or not, here he was. George had got heartily sick of waiting for Abbey to forward to him the money promised. Keats had sent him one hundred pounds, drawn from Tom's undivided estate, but what George desired was to have the estate divided and obtain his share of it at once. The one hundred pounds sent by John was but a drop in the bucket of George's expectations and he had come to the conclusion that, if he were to get what he wanted, he must cross the ocean and fetch it himself.

The financial situation of the Keats children, if we can put implicit faith in George's statement of it made to Dilke in 1824,[1] was somewhat as follows (I say somewhat, because George himself was not certain of the earlier sums. He qualifies his figures by saying "presuming" them to be so and so, "probably" I had such and such, "I do not remember" the amount, "suppose" it to have been this or that. A most unsatisfactory kind of accounting): On Mrs. Jennings's death, the children had each a capital of fifteen hundred pounds, of which Abbey was the trustee. This seems to have included the sum received by Mrs. Jennings from her husband, and the sum bequeathed to Mrs. Rawlings with reversion to her children.[2] The thousand pounds each, directly bequeathed to his grandchildren by Mr. Jennings, is omitted from the calculation, as it could not be inherited until Fanny Keats came of age; and the undivided residue of Mr. Jennings's estate was hopelessly tied up by the dilatory methods of the Court of Chancery.

At the time of George's going to America, John had, in various ways, chiefly through his apprenticeship and tuition fees, but also by over-spending his income, reduced his capital to five hundred pounds, out of which he had lent two hundred. George had spent little of his money himself, but he had advanced a considerable sum to John and Tom, for Tom had not only the expenses of illness to meet, he, also, had spent far more than his income. George, wishing to take ready money with him, sold his stock, by doing which he realized an extra hundred pounds, which hundred pounds he employed in paying various debts contracted by his brothers. He left five hundred pounds behind him for John's benefit (whose capital at this time amounted to no more than three hundred pounds), four hundred of which was his own money, and one hundred pounds from Tom's share of the general fund paid him by Abbey because of what he had advanced to Tom, and set

[1] Author's Collection. [2] See Vol. I, pp. 26–27.

sail for America with eleven hundred pounds to start his new life upon, all of which he lost in the boat venture entered into at Audubon's suggestion.

Evidently George, in 1824, thought that his brothers were deeply in his debt. Perhaps they were, but there seems to be another side to the question. George had probably forgotten a letter he had written to John at Teignmouth in 1818,[1] but a copy of it is still extant,[2] and in it George says:

> "I am about paying your's as well as Tom's bills, of which I shall keep regular accounts and for the sake of justice and a future proper understanding I intend calculating the probable amount Tom and I are indebted to you, something of this kind must be done, or at the end of two or three years we shall be all at sixes and sevens."

Two years had passed, and they were all at sixes and sevens. By this time, George seems to have entirely forgotten that he had ever been indebted to John at all. Very likely the debts to and fro between them had left George John's creditor to some extent. But what that extent was, George himself did not know. He says that up to the moment of his departure the brothers had had everything in common. When, in January, 1820, George returned to England, Tom's estate, after all the debts contracted by him had been paid, amounted to eleven hundred pounds. Out of this sum, John had drawn a hundred pounds for himself, having apparently entirely spent, or lent, the three hundred pounds George says he had a year and a half before. He had also drawn a second hundred pounds, which he had sent to George.

George's first act on his return was to go over the accounts of Tom's property and make a proper division of the whole. He immediately gave a hundred pounds into Abbey's hands for his sister, to balance the like sums taken by

[1] See Vol. I, p. 605. [2] Author's Collection.

John and himself. He then proceeded to divide the remainder, eight hundred pounds, into three equal parts, which should have given each of them two hundred and sixty-odd pounds. (In his explanation, George, never too accurate, advances the divided shares to two hundred and seventy each, for the purpose, one supposes, of a simpler calculation.) At this point he suggested to John that he should reserve a hundred pounds of his third for immediate use, and place the remainder in his, George's, hands for him to take to America and invest in whatever business he might embark upon. John, generous to a fault, and a baby where money was concerned, consented readily to this proposition. George also took back the one hundred pounds given him by Abbey out of Tom's money the year before "in consideration of what I had done for Tom." (What had become of the remaining four hundred pounds also left behind the year before, he does not say. Very likely part of it had been spent in England by John and Tom, and part may have been forwarded to him in America.) Counting the hundred pounds recently sent him by John, George had now from Tom's estate five hundred and forty pounds (his calculation, it was really five hundred and thirty-two pounds), which, with the previous one hundred pounds given him by Abbey, brought his total up to six hundred and forty pounds. To this, Abbey, probably as a speculation, added sixty-odd pounds for himself, so bringing the sum to the round figure of seven hundred pounds, with which capital George started back to America in hopes this time of making a success where before he had met with such signal disaster.

This is the story, as far as it is possible to learn it, of those financial transactions which so greatly incensed Keats's friends. There is no doubt that George hoped to increase John's capital along with his own, and had every intention of treating his brother with the utmost fairness. But it is also true that, at a time when John was dying and

in grievous need of funds, George had money of his which would have made all the difference could he have obtained it. George did not know the extent of his need, nor how ill he was, and having sunk the money in another boat speculation was powerless to remit what he had not at the moment got. In the end, he squarely discharged his brother's posthumous debts; but even this action could not restore to him the friendship of Brown, Severn, Haslam, and others who were firmly persuaded of his dishonesty. Dilke, Reynolds, and Rice, on the other hand, exonerated George entirely after reading his explanation, which I have just paraphrased.

George's chief fault seems to have lain in not explaining matters fully to John while he was in England. His explanation to Dilke of this side of the affair was:

> "John himself was ignorant of the real state of his funds, it was so painful a subject and in our private communications he was so extremely melancholy that I always had to shew him the pleasing side of things; when I left London I had not courage to say that the 700£ I had obtained was not all ours by right, he therefore imagined it was, but he never thought and never could have informed anyone that the whole was his. I never considered it necessary to let him know the rights of it, since I did not intend to limit my remittances but by my means . . . it was always my intention to keep him under the idea that I was in his debt."

This was most mistaken kindness on George's part, and I fear we cannot free his conduct from a grain of self-interest and some moral cowardice. But there is no doubt that he was fully persuaded at the time that John would benefit in the end, as he undoubtedly would have done had he lived a few years longer. For George did finally succeed, becoming the managing partner in a flourishing flour- and saw-mill concern which yielded him ample returns on his money.

Fanny Brawne, who, of all people, had reason to blame

George, spoke of him with wise and tempered justice. To be sure, her correspondent was his sister, which may have affected her expression; but, considering that she was writing only a few days after hearing of Keats's death, it seems probable that she spoke her mind with conviction. What she said was this:

> "George . . . is no favorite of mine and he never liked me so that I am not likely to say too much in his favour . . . but I must say I think he is more blamed than he should be. I think him extravagant . . . but people in their zeal make him out much worse than that — Soon after . . . Tom died . . . John wrote to him offering him any assistance or money in his power. At that time he was not engaged to me and having just lost one brother felt all his affection turned toward the one remaining — George I dare say at first had no thoughts of accepting his offers but when his affairs did not succeed and he had a wife and child to support I cannot wonder that he should consider them first . . . By that time he wished to marry himself but he could not refuse the money."

It was this letter I had in mind when I said, some time ago,[1] that Keats was not quite candid with Fanny Brawne in the matter of his offer of assistance to George sent from Winchester. The offer was made when he was endeavoring to wean himself from Miss Brawne. That he deeply regretted it, we can very well believe, but the fact that he had made it was undoubtedly why he consented to George's proposition. He had given his word, and we saw a few pages back what Brown said about his invariably living up to his word when once given.

I have dealt with this circumstance at so much length, because no other of Keats's biographers has done more than glance at it. It is the least understood of the facts of Keats's life; but that it is an exceedingly important fact, no one can fail to see. It filled his last year with

[1] See Vol. II, p. 349.

a sordid misery which he might have been spared, and, after his death, brought about a feud among his friends that has deprived the world of a biography written by any one who had known him. In spite of George's asseverations, Keats did at last come to believe that the seven hundred pounds had all been his, and he apparently told his friends as much. For Keats to lose his implicit faith in his brother was a terrible thing, and uninformed as he was, he did lose it to a certain extent, although not until later, when George's failure to come to his aid — a failure the cause of which he never perfectly realized — left him puzzled and surprised, and half unconsciously loosened the tie between them in Keats's mind. It was not to George that he poured out his heart in the first weeks of his Italian journey; it was to Brown.

The weeks which George spent in London are all carefully recorded in a delightful letter which John wrote to his sister-in-law in America. Keats tries to be jocular, but he cannot quite keep his morbidness from creeping in, here and there. George, who was anxious to see as many of his old friends as possible, went out to Deptford, where Haslam, who had been married on October sixteenth, now lived. Keats had not, it would seem, gone to the wedding, and he could not bring himself to go to Deptford now with George. He could not face the sight of a couple still in honeymoon temper, and we can easily see why. Keats tells Georgiana, who had accused him of filling his letters with "Haydon & Co.," that he is very idle, and that he never sees Haydon or Co. But he was seeing a few people nevertheless, principally on George's account. The brothers went about a good deal among their various friends; we are told of a dinner at Taylor's, "a pianoforte hop" at Dilke's, of going to the play with Mrs. Wylie; but beneath Keats's account of these mild gaieties, there is the ever-present undercurrent of bitterness and gloom. He looked out on the world with jaundiced eyes. All was tasteless,

because he was a very sick man and a miserably unhappy one. Georgiana might well have taken alarm at this passage:

> "I am tired of the theatres. Almost all parties I may chance to fall into I know by heart . . . If I go to Hunt's, I run my head into many tunes heard before, old puns and old music; to Haydon's worn-out discourses of poetry and painting. The Miss R[eynolds]'s I am afraid to speak to, for fear of some sickly reiteration of phrase or sentiment . . . At Dilke's I fall foul of politics. 'Tis best to remain aloof from people and like their good parts without being eternally troubled with the dull process of their every-day lives . . . All I can say is that, standing at Charing Cross and looking east, west, north, and south I see nothing but dulness."

The letter was begun on Thursday, January thirteenth, and continued at intervals for two weeks. On Friday, January twenty-eighth, Keats saw George off to Liverpool on the "Royal Alexander" coach leaving the King's Arms, Snow Hill, at six in the morning. His last entry to his sister-in-law is dated on that day, after his return to Hampstead. He had forgotten to give George the letter before he started, and closes in a hurry so that it may be sure to catch the mail that evening and reach George before he sailed. It must have done so, for the mail was due in Liverpool at three o'clock on Sunday morning, and George himself had only got there at four the afternoon before. On that same Sunday, George wrote to John,[1] telling him that he had had a cold ride, but had gone immediately upon his arrival to see about sailings and had secured a passage in the "Courier" packet, leaving on the following Tuesday, before he went to bed.

One thing Keats told Georgiana at the very end of his letter. It was that he intended "to retire into the country." Evidently Keats had come to the conclusion that his only

[1] Unpublished letter. Day Collection.

hope of getting on his feet again mentally was to reproduce somewhere the weeks in Winchester.

George's visit had not been to either of the brothers what they might have expected. George had found John very much changed. "He was not the same person," he told Dilke many years afterwards, "altho' his reception of me was as warm as heart could wish, he did not speak with his former openness and unreserve, he had lost the reviving custom of venting his griefs." It is not difficult to see why this was. Keats needed the money he felt constrained to let George have, and George permitted his brother to see that he did not like Fanny Brawne. George appears to have been told of the engagement, but his attitude can be judged by the fact that, in sending his greetings to various friends in the Liverpool letter, all he can bring himself to say of the Brawnes is "Rem$^{s}$ to your neighbours." In the following November, he wrote to John: "If we meet a safe opportunity for England we will send Miss Brawne an india Crape dress or marino shawl or something scarce with you, but cheap with us. She has our thanks for her kindness during your illness." Let us hope John never received this letter, or, if it followed him to Rome, that it was never read. Four years later, George speaks of the Brawnes to Dilke as "Mrs. Brawne and her lovely daughter," but the epithet rings a little false, and by that time George's opinion of Miss Brawne was of no consequence to anyone.

George took more to America with him than money; he took copies of many of Keats's poems which he had been at pains to make while in London, for, in spite of the questionable ethics of his conduct, his affection for his brother and interest in his work was genuine and never wavered.

On Thursday, February third, the crash came. The weather had been very changeable. In the middle of January there had been snow, Keats had told Georgiana that "The sun comes upon the snow and makes a prettier

candy than we have on twelfth-night cakes." It had still been cold when George started for Liverpool; but suddenly there came a thaw, the kind of thaw which tempts to imprudence and ill rewards confidence. On this Thursday, Keats had gone to town, and had most unwisely left off his warm greatcoat. He returned by a late stage, and, according to his usual practice, on the top of it. Thaw though it was, the night air was very different from that of the previous day. It was raw, damp, and penetrating, and Keats was without his greatcoat. The result was that he caught a bad chill. Brown's account of this evening is well known, but it must be repeated again here. It is as follows:

> "At eleven o'clock, he came into the house in a state that looked like fierce intoxication. Such a state in him, I knew, was impossible; it therefore was the more fearful. I asked hurriedly, 'What is the matter? you are fevered?' 'Yes, yes,' he answered, 'I was on the outside of the stage this bitter day till I was severely chilled, — but now I don't feel it. Fevered! — of course, a little.' He mildly and instantly yielded, a property in his nature towards any friend, to my request that he should go to bed. I entered his chamber as he leapt into bed. On entering the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and I heard him say, — 'That is blood from my mouth.' I went towards him; he was examining a single drop of blood upon the sheet. 'Bring me the candle, Brown, and let me see this blood.' After regarding it steadfastly he looked up in my face, with a calmness of countenance that I can never forget, and said, — 'I know the colour of that blood; — it is arterial blood; — I cannot be deceived in that colour; — that drop of blood is my death-warrant; — I must die.' I ran for a surgeon; my friend was bled; and, at five in the morning, I left him after he had been some time in a quiet sleep."

The moment Keats had for months secretly dreaded had come, but the marvel is that it had delayed so long. Yet,

even now, the doctors refused to consider his attack an evidence of pulmonary tuberculosis. They palliated the symptoms, and denied the cause.

The very next day, although kept in bed, Keats was able to write to Miss Brawne:

> "DEAREST FANNY, I shall send this the moment you return. They say I must remain confined to this room for some time. The consciousness that you love me will make a pleasant prison of the house next to yours. You must come and see me frequently: this evening without fail — when you must not mind my speaking in a low tone for I am ordered to do so though I *can* speak out.
>
> Yours ever
> sweetest love. —
> J. KEATS."

At the bottom of the page, Keats wrote "turn over," and on the other side of the sheet continued:

> "Perhaps your Mother is not at home and so you must wait till she comes. You must see me to-night and let me hear you say you will come to-morrow.
>
> Brown said you were all out. I have been looking for the stage the whole afternoon. Had I known this I could not have remain'd so silent all day."

By this letter we plainly see that, however jealous Keats had sometimes been, however unworthily he had occasionally been led to think of Miss Brawne, the moment he was in serious trouble he turned to her with longing and confidence. The last sentence of his note seems to imply a previous note from Fanny, telling him that she had been at home all day, but was going out for a little while.

From this fourth of February, life for Keats settled itself for nearly two months to an entirely different routine, the routine of a carefully cherished invalid. Brown was indefatigable in his attentions, but in one particular his tact failed, and inexperience of illness led him into a blunder.

He had been amusing himself by copying heads from engravings of Hogarth s pictures. One, newly purchased, was the *Methodist Meeting*. This picture haunted Keats, and, sick as he was, gave him what he called a "psalm-singing night-mare," it was in fact responsible for some very uncomfortable nights, yet it does not seem to have occurred to Brown to keep it out of sight.

From the very first, the Brawnes, both mother and daughter, were unwearied in their efforts to do everything possible for Keats. Fanny ceased entirely her excursions to town, and held herself ready to come and see her lover at whatever time in the day he wanted her. This visit was a daily one, except on certain occasions when Brown or the doctor thought it wiser for her not to come. But whether she came or not, she wrote. We have none of her notes, sent by hand to the invalid, but from the tenor of Keats's answers we know them to have been warm and reassuring ones. Now it was she who worried, fearing that her lover might find her cold. Keats's reply to one such letter tells us much:

> "I wish I had read your note before you went last night that I might have assured you how far I was from suspecting any coldness. You had a just right to be a little silent to one who speaks so plainly to you. You must believe — you shall, you will — that I can do nothing, say nothing, think nothing of you but what has its spring in the Love which has so long been my pleasure and torment. On the night I was taken ill — when so violent a rush of blood came to my Lungs that I felt nearly suffocated — I assure you I felt it possible I might not survive, and at that moment thought of nothing but you. When I said to Brown 'this is unfortunate' I thought of you. 'Tis true that since the first two or three days other subjects have entered my head. I shall be looking forward to Health and the Spring and a regular routine of our old Walks."

Keats made every effort to keep both Miss Brawne and

his sister from realizing the extent of his fears for himself. He tells his sister that everybody has a cold, even Brown is "a little wheezy." But although the doctor's diagnosis gave his fears no encouragement, Keats's medical studies forbade him to take a sanguine view of his condition. So squarely did he regard his case, that he hinted to Fanny Brawne that it might be wiser for her to terminate their engagement. Her reply was a flat negative. His answer to this shows his intense relief:

> "How hurt I should have been had you ever acceded to what is, notwithstanding, very reasonable! How much the more do I love you from the general result! . . . My greatest torment since I have known you has been the fear of you being a little inclined to the Cressid; but that suspicion I dismiss utterly and remain happy in the surety of your Love, which I assure you is as much a wonder to me as a delight. Send me the words 'Good night' to put under my pillow."

After this, Fanny Brawne sent him a written "Good night" every evening.

Keats was kept in bed for two days, but on the third he was allowed to lie in the front parlour on the sofa made up as a bed. Of this removal, he wrote to his sister, in his old vein of quaint humour, partly the result of his change of surroundings, undoubtedly, but even more certainly of his determination not to let the young girl worry about him:

> "How much more comfortable than a dull room upstairs, where one gets tired of the pattern of the bed curtains. Besides I see all that passes — for instance now, this morning — if I had been in my own room I should not have seen the coals brought in. On sunday between the hours of twelve and one I descried a Pot boy. I conjectured it might be the one o'clock beer — Old women with bobbins and red cloaks and unpresuming bonnets I see creeping about the heath. Gipseys after hare skins and silver spoons. Then goes by a fellow with a wooden clock under his arm that

strikes a hundred and more. Then comes the old French emigrant (who has been very well to do in France) with his hands joined behind on his hips, and his face full of political schemes . . . As for those fellows the Brickmakers they are always passing to and fro."

This is by no means the end of Keats's list of what his window revealed, but it will serve to show how indomitable a will he opposed to illness when it finally came. Either his weakened vitality lessened his torments of mind and sex, or Fanny Brawne's tenderness had raised him on so high a pinnacle of security that he could defy them. Probably they were equal agents in the better balance he certainly had during the weeks of his confinement.

On Thursday, the tenth, he was well enough to walk round the garden for a quarter of an hour, and this he was able to repeat, weather permitting, on subsequent days. So far his improvement went, but no farther, and he began to chafe a little at the apparent halt in his recovery. The powers that were — probably the doctor, Brown, and Mrs. Brawne — put their heads together and decided that to see Fanny every day was too exciting, so her visits were ordered to be spaced a little more widely. "According to all appearances I am to be separated from you as much as possible," he wrote her. "How I shall be able to bear it, or whether it will not be worse than your presence now and then, I cannot tell," and he urges her no longer to refrain from going to town. He thinks she had better not come before "tomorrow evening," but begs her to send "without fail a good night." At the end of the letter, his sense of honour forces him once more to do the decent thing:

> "You know our situation — what hope is there if I should be recovered ever so soon — my very health will not suffer me to make any great exertion. I am recommended not even to read poetry, much less write it. I wish I had even a little hope. I cannot say forget me — but I would mention that there are impossibilities in this world."

Fanny's counter to this was to accuse him of wishing to forget her. He wrote again, assuring her that he had thought only of her; for himself:

> "I should as soon think of choosing to die as to part from you."

Yet he feels constrained to add:

> "Believe too my Love that our friends think and speak for the best, and if their best is not our best it is not their fault."

But Fanny Brawne, we remember, was not easily turned aside from any course of action she had determined upon, and how much less in such a thing as marriage. She must have told Keats that she did not care a button what any one said, for this is his reply:

> "Then all we have to do is to be patient. Whatever violence I may sometimes do myself by hinting at what would appear to any one but ourselves a matter of necessity, I do not think I could bear any approach of a thought of losing you."

So things resumed what was become their normal habit. Miss Brawne came frequently and wrote every night. She would also go out into the garden in order that Keats might see her from the back parlour where he seems to have taken to sitting. Sometimes she would appear at her window when he, in his turn, was taking a turn outdoors.

Two weeks after his hæmorrhage, on February sixteenth, he wrote to Rice, a rather sad letter which contains this wistful paragraph:

> "How astonishingly (here I must premise that illness, as far as I can judge in so short a time, has relieved my mind of a load of deceptive thoughts and images, and makes me perceive things in a truer light), — how astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its

> natural beauties upon us! . . . I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy — their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy . . . I have seen foreign flowers in hothouses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again."

The treatment of tuberculosis in the early nineteenth century was diametrically opposed to that of the present day. It seems to have been entirely focussed on the symptoms of the disease, not at all on the disease itself. If the patient had a hæmorrhage, he was promptly bled, and his food reduced to a minimum and vegetable at that. Keats speaks of the "small quantity of food to which I am obliged to confine myself: I am sure a mouse would starve upon it." By this process of attrition the patient was so wasted that the hæmorrhages, at least in the early stages of illness, were often temporarily diminished, whereat the doctor rejoiced and declared that his remedies were taking effect. Keats was so extraordinarily vigorous a man that there is little doubt that, under the régime prescribed for tuberculous patients to-day, he would have lived for many years, if not have recovered entirely. As it was, everything was done to kill him and nothing to cure. Throughout this attack, we hear a great deal of the starvation diet, "living on pseudo-victuals," Keats calls it, and he warns Fanny Brawne that, if she finds him "low-spirited," she must ascribe it to the medicine he is taking "which is of a nerve-shaking nature." The doctors assured him that there was "very little the matter" with him, but he adds, with a shrewdness beyond their wisdom: "I cannot believe them till the weight and tightness of my Chest is mitigated."

Two great obstructions to recovery were constantly preying upon him. One of his notes to Fanny Brawne contains this passage:

> "How illness stands as a barrier betwixt me and you! Even if I was well — I must make myself as good a Philosopher as possible. Now I have had opportunities of passing nights anxious and awake I have found other thoughts obtrude upon me. 'If I should die,' said I to myself, 'I have left no immortal work behind me — nothing to make my friends proud of my memory — but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd."

Poor fellow, if only he could have known the verdict of posterity, and how many of these same friends are remembered solely because of their connection with him!

As time went on, and Keats did not seem to gain, Miss Brawne became alarmed and began to fear that something was being kept from her. Toward the end of February, she demanded to know the truth. To this, Keats answered:

> "Indeed I will not deceive you in respect to my health. This is the fact as far as I know. I have been confined three weeks and am not yet well — this proves that there is something wrong about me which my constitution will either conquer or give way to. Let us hope for the best."

Still, even as he writes, a thrush is singing, and he tells Fanny not to send back any more of his books: "I have a great pleasure in the thought of you looking on them."

On February twenty-third or twenty-fifth (the letter is undated, and the postmark difficult to read), Keats wrote to Reynolds, who was planning a trip to Brussels. Among other things which Keats says in this letter is the following interesting statement:

> "I hope I shall soon be well enough to proceed with my fa[e]ries and set you about the notes on Sundays and Stray-days."

The "faeries" were, of course, those in the *Cap and Bells*. The scheme of the poem was to include a series of "notes" to give a mock appearance of erudition to the poem and so

add to the joke. Apparently Reynolds, with his keen wit, was to be responsible for these. This passage is particularly important, for it proves that Keats's erstwhile pettishness with the poem had quite disappeared, and that he had every intention of finishing it when he should be well enough to write again.

As soon as Keats was able to see people, which seems to have been fairly soon after his attack, his friends made a point of coming out to see him. Even Mrs. Wylie came, everybody indeed but Fanny Keats, poor girl. Abbey appears to have recognized no reason for her to go and see her brother, and she was still under age, and entirely subject to his orders. How Mrs. Jennings would have felt if she could have seen the working out of her plan for the protection and comfort of her grandchildren, is something not pleasant to speculate upon.

Before Mrs. Wylie had made her first visit, some time, probably, toward the end of February, Keats wrote her a letter.[1] A small fragment of this letter was published by Buxton Forman, evidently all he had seen, and, having nothing to go upon, he attributed it to quite a wrong date. The whole of the letter has never been printed, and as so small a portion was published by Buxton Forman, I give it here in full.

"Wentworth Place
Friday Morn.

My dear Mrs. Wylie.

I have been very negligent in not letting you hear from me for so long a time considering the anxiety I know you feel for me. Charles has been here this morning and will tell you that I am better. Just as he came in I was sitting down to write to you, and I shall not let his visit supersede these few lines. Charles enquired whether I had heard from George. It is impossible to guess whether he has landed yet, and if he has it will take at least a month for any

[1] Day Collection.

communication to reach us. I hope you keep your spirits a great height above freezing point and live in expectation of good news next summer. Louisville is not such a Monstrous distance: if Georgiana liv'd at York it would be just as far off. You see George will make nothing of the journey here and back. His absence will have been perhaps a fortunate thing for Georgiana, for the pleasure of his return will be so great that it will wipe away the consciousness of many troubles felt before very deeply. She will see him return'd from us and be convinced that the separation is not so very formidable although the Atlantic is between. If George succeeds it will be better certainly that they should stop in America: if not why not return? It is better in ill luck to have at least the comfort of ones friends than to be ship-wreck'd among Americans. But I have good hopes as far as I can judge from what I have heard from George. He should by this time be taught Alertness and Carefulness — If they should stop in America for five or six years let us hope they may have about Three Children: then the eldest will be getting old enough to be society. The very crying will keep their ears employed, and their spirits from being melancholy. Mrs. Millar I hear continues confined to her Chamber — if she would take my advice I should recommend her to keep it till the middle of April and then go to some Sea-town in Devonshire which is sheltered from the east wind — which blows down the channel very briskly even in April. Give my Compliments to Miss Millar and Miss Waldegrave.

Your affectionate friend
JOHN KEATS."

It speaks much for Keats's thoughtful consideration that, ill as he was, he should have written to Mrs. Wylie to relieve her anxiety about George's return voyage.

Try as he would, Keats was himself and had his own temperament to reckon with. It need not surprise us, therefore, to find him imagining a flirtatious tendency in Brown directed towards Fanny Brawne. It was all the merest moonshine, as we know, but he could not get rid of

it. The result was that he decided that Fanny's visits, those visits in which she brought her work and stayed some little time, should be made only when Brown was out of the house. Perhaps it was to reassure him on this score that Miss Brawne gave him a ring. Such a token could not fail of being the greatest comfort to Keats. We do not know how this ring was made, whether it was of plain gold or had some sort of a stone. I incline to think that it was a seal ring, of agate or carnelian, for their joint names seem to have been engraved upon it. The day after receiving it, he wrote to Fanny:

> "The power of your benediction is not of so weak a nature as to pass from the ring in four and twenty hours — it is like a sacred Chalice once consecrated and ever consecrate. I shall kiss your name and mine where your Lips have been."

In another note, which Buxton Forman puts after this one, Keats at last says what Fanny Brawne had been waiting a year to have him say:

> "You uttered a half complaint once that I only lov'd your Beauty. Have I nothing else then to love in you but that? Do I not see a heart naturally furnish'd with wings imprison itself with me? No ill prospect has been able to turn your thoughts a moment from me. This perhaps should be as much a subject of sorrow as joy — but I will not think of that."

A little later on, he writes:

> "How can you bear so long an imprisonment at Hampstead? I shall always remember it with all the gusto that a monopolizing carl should. I could build an Altar to you for it."

Yet how quickly he forgot, we shall soon see. Still we must not blame him; Fanny Brawne did not. She understood his nature, and the nature of his illness, too well.

By the end of February, the outer world began to knock at Keats's door again. Bryan Waller Procter ("Barry Cornwall"), whom he did not know, sent him his *Sicilian Story*, just published, and, shortly after, his first book, *Marcian Colonna*, in place of a copy sent much earlier by Hunt who had forgotten to deliver it. In the interval between these gifts, Procter got Hunt to take him to see Keats. Procter's impression of his host, gained on this and one or two subsequent visits, is particularly interesting, since it shows that to strangers the effect of Keats's personality was the same that it had always been. Procter describes[1] him thus:

> "I was introduced to him by Leigh Hunt, and found him very pleasant, and free from all affectation in manner and opinion. Indeed it would be difficult to discover a man with a more bright and open countenance. He was always ready to hear and to reply; to discuss, to reason, to admit; and to join in serious talk or common gossip . . . I never encountered a more manly and simple young man.
>
> In person he was short, and had eyes large and wonderfully luminous, and a resolute bearing; not defiant, but well sustained."

Keats considered Procter's sending him the books "a specimen of great politeness," but the poems themselves he could not like. He wrote to Reynolds:

> "I confess they teaze me — they are composed of amiability, the Seasons, the Leaves, the Moon &c. upon which he rings (according to Hunt's expression) triple bob majors. However that is nothing — I think he likes poetry for its own sake, not his."

Another reminder of the world came in the shape of a hint from his publishers that they should like to start on the printing of his new book as soon as possible. This was welcome, but rather appalling, news; however, before

[1] *Recollections of Men of Letters*, by B. W. Procter.

anything could be done, Keats was taken suddenly quite ill, not with a hæmorrhage this time, but with something in the nature of a heart attack. It occurred on Monday, March sixth, and on Wednesday, the eighth, he was still so ill that his condition excited real alarm and caused Brown to write the following letter to Taylor:[1]

"Hampstead
Wednesday 8th March.

DEAR TAYLOR,

Poor Keats will be unable to prepare his Poems for the Press for a long time. He was taken on Monday evening with violent palpitations at the heart, and has since remained too weak to get up. I expect Dr. Bree every hour. I am wretchedly depressed.

Your's sincerely,
CHAS BROWN."

On the reverse of the sheet, Brown added:

"If you come, do not let him hear your voice, as the slightest circumstance tending to create surprize, or any other emotion, must be avoided.

C.B.

P.S. Since writing the above, Dr. Bree has been here, and I am rejoiced to say gives very favourable hopes.

C.B."

Two days later, however, Keats was up and about again, and even able to resume his walks in the garden. He was very nervous, but this was laid at the door of his enervating diet. How fearfully wide of the mark Dr. Bree's diagnosis was, can be seen by the following letter, also from Brown to Taylor:[2]

"Hampstead
Friday 10 March

DEAR TAYLOR,

After my dismal note I am glad to be able to give you

[1] Unpublished letter in Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.
[2] *Ibid.*

good news. Keats is so well as to be out of danger. We intend, if the weather remain kindly, to go to the coast of Hants. He walked in the garden to-day. You will suspect I gave a useless alarm, but I wrote at the time I was told it was possible he might suddenly be lost to us in one of those fits. Hessey's letter came, & I opened it, for Keats could not endure even the circumstance of a letter being put in his hands, — nor can he bear it even yet, tho' I consider him perfectly out of danger, & I am happy to tell you that we are now assured there is no pulmonary affection, no organic defect whatever, — the disease is on his *mind*, and there I hope he will soon be cured.

Your's sincerely
CHAS BROWN.

Remember me to Mr. Hessey."

Dr. Bree's name in connection with the case shows that somebody had decided that a more expert opinion than Sawrey's was needed. Robert Bree was a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and a specialist on asthma and other diseases of the respiration. A treatise of his on this subject had, in 1815, reached its fifth edition. Two papers on *The Use of Digitalis in Consumption* show that he had some claim to be considered a specialist in that disease also. But, however eminent, Dr. Bree was certainly a poor diagnostician.

As Keats got better, his mind reverted to his forthcoming book, and he determined to look it over and see that the poems were quite as he wanted them. Woodhouse, as we know, had many copies of Keats's poems, and these seem to have been tentatively put together by the publishers and submitted to him for approval. This manuscript he had passed on to Fanny Brawne, a most natural thing to do, and one which proves her to have been entirely in Keats's confidence as regards his work, something which posterity has been led to doubt. In a note to her which seems to have been written very soon after this seizure, Keats says:

"I am much better this morning than I was a week ago: indeed I improve a little every day. I rely upon taking a walk with you upon the first of May: in the meantime undergoing a babylonish captivity I shall not be jew enough to hang up my harp upon a willow, but rather endeavour to clear up my arrears in versifying, and with returning health begin upon something new: pursuant to which resolution it will be necessary to have my or rather Taylor's manuscript, which you, if you please, will send me by my Messenger either today or tomorrow . . . If you meet with anything better (worse) than common in your Magazines let me see it."

The last sentence makes it quite clear that Keats and Miss Brawne were in the habit of exchanging opinions on books as well as the books themselves. Such little details as this have been carefully left out of account by writers on Keats. They have believed Fanny Brawne to have been a frivolous and silly girl, and have taken no pains to verify the justness of the charge. That it crumbles to the ground on examination, my readers must by this time be well aware. Why Keats had never been in love before was largely because he had never met a woman possessed of both attraction and brains. Fanny Brawne had both in no mean degree, hence her ever-renewing charm for him.

Another note shows Keats going on mildly with his work:

"It will be a nice idle amusement to hunt after a motto for my Book which I will have if lucky enough to hit upon a fit one — not intending to write a preface."

The "fit" motto was not found, and the volume appeared without one. Still a third note continues the story. (We must remember that these notes were daily messages, so that several notes means no more than the lapse of as many days.) Miss Brawne seems to have worried lest Keats were over-exerting himself, whereat he answers her:

"I do not at all fatigue myself with writing, having merely to put a line or two here and there, a Task which would worry a stout state of body and mind, but which just suits me as I can do no more."

Earlier in this same note, Keats even allows himself a little real hope, he says:

"Perhaps on your account I have imagined my illness more serious than it is: how horrid was the chance of slipping into the ground instead of into your arms — the difference is amazing Love. Death must come at last; Man must die, as Shallow says; but before that is my fate I fain would try what more pleasures than you have given, so sweet a creature as you can give. Let me have another op[p]ortunity of years before me and I will not die without being remember'd. Take care of yourself dear that we may both be well in the Summer."

It must have been just about this time that Brown wrote again to Taylor.[1] This letter has no date, but its context places it with sufficient exactness:

"Dear Sir,

Keats has been slowly recovering; yesterday and to-day however he has been greatly altered for the better. He wishes his Poems to be published as soon as convenient to yourself, — the volume to commence with St. Agnes Eve. He was occupied yesterday in revising Lamia. It is not his intention at present to have a Preface, — at least so we talked together to-day. He desires to be remembered. When will you come? for *he* must not venture to Town before we have mild weather, — & when? It is very pleasant at Hampstead — *in our parlour.*

Your's sincerely
Chas Brown.

Don't let any one take a Copy of Otho."

Whether Taylor came out or not, no one says, but Keats certainly went in, tempted perhaps by a fortunate change

[1] Unpublished letter in Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

of weather. A recently discovered letter[1] from Taylor to the poet, John Clare, leaves no doubt on the subject. Writing on Thursday, March sixteenth, Taylor says:

> "Keats came to dine with me the Day before yesterday for the first Time since his Illness — He was sorry he did not see you — When I read Solitude to him he observed that the description too much prevailed over the Sentiment — But never mind that — it is a good Fault."

It was fortunate for Keats that dinner in his day was an afternoon affair, for on that Thursday the sun set at six o'clock, by which hour we may be very sure that he was safely back at Wentworth Place. But, however mild the weather, it was a long way to New Bond Street, and the discussion of his own and other people's poetry was bound to be exciting. Keats seems to have felt the effects of his first outing a little, if we may judge from a note to Miss Brawne which appears to have been written very soon after this. He and Brown were expecting some friends for the evening, evidently, in spite of his fatigue:

> "In consequence of our company I suppose I shall not see you before tomorrow. I am much better to-day — indeed all I have to complain of is want of strength and a little tightness in the Chest. I envied Sam's[2] walk with you to-day; which I will not do again as I may get very tired of envying. I imagine you now sitting in your new black dress which I like so much and if I were a little less selfish and more enthusiastic I should run round and surprise you with a knock at the door. I fear I am too prudent for a dying kind of Lover. Yet, there is a great difference between going off in warm blood like Romeo, and making one's exit like a frog in a frost."

Much as Keats undoubtedly wanted to run round to the Brawnes' and see Fanny, the exertion loomed enormous to

[1] *New Sidelights on Keats, Lamb, and Others. From Letters to J. Clare*, by Edmund Blunden. *The London Mercury*, June, 1921.

[2] Miss Brawne's brother.

him. He was still very weak, that was the long and the short of it. Indeed, it seems as though the work of revising had really been too much for him. And no wonder; revising poems is no such easy matter as Keats, to allay her fears, wanted Fanny Brawne to think. By Monday, March twentieth, he had overdone it, and been commanded by Dr. Bree to write nothing for a time. On that day, notwithstanding orders, he scribbled a short note to his sister, in which he said:

> "According to your desire I write to-day. It must be but a few lines for I have been attacked several times with a palpitation at the heart and the Doctor says I must not make the slightest exertion. I am much the same to-day as I have been for a week past. They say 'tis nothing but debility and will entirely cease on my recovery of my strength which is the object of my present diet. As the Doctor will not suffer me to write I shall ask Mr. Brown to let you hear news of me for the future if I should not get stronger soon."

Apparently Keats had kept on with his work in spite of the palpitations until finally the doctor put his foot down. But it is also possible that these last notes to Fanny Brawne were written at the end of February, and not in March, as Buxton Forman supposes. These hand-written missives, sent from one house to the other, are entirely without dates, not even the days of the week being given. Buxton Forman arranged them as well as he could, and I have seen no reason to change his order. The only actual dates which we have to guide us, in this instance, are the dates on Brown's two letters, that on the letter from Taylor to Clare (none of which Buxton Forman knew of), and that on the letter to Fanny Keats. I have cogitated much on the subject, but have finally concluded that Buxton Forman's arrangement is probably correct, and that the facts are chronologically as I have stated them.

Keats was in a decidedly gloomy frame of mind on that

Monday, but the "present diet" certainly did him good, for on Saturday he was well enough to go to town for the private view of Haydon's finally finished picture, *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly.

The Egyptian Hall was a curious building. Its name was derived from its façade, which represented a bad imitation of Egyptian Architecture. For some years, it had housed a miscellaneous collection of objects, collected by the jeweller-naturalist-antiquarian, William Bullock. This "London," or "Bullock's, Museum" was an extremely popular resort in the early years of the nineteenth century. In 1819, the collection was sold at auction and its premises were to let. This was Haydon's opportunity. He immediately hired the large room upstairs for a year from the first of March, 1820, and having not a penny to bless himself with, agreed to pay a rental of three hundred pounds. Haydon's account of the preparation of the room for his huge picture is among the most amusing pages of his *Autobiography*. Suffice it here to say that, by Friday night, March twenty-fourth, the preparations were completed, and on Saturday the hall was opened to the ticket holders for the private view, the public not being admitted until Monday. The private view was an immense success; the street was blocked with carriages, the passages reverberated with voices; it was, says Haydon, "a regular rout at noon-day." The world of fashion had turned out in force. Drama, literature, the arts, the church, the state, and foreign states, all were represented, and there was the Persian Ambassador in a resplendent native costume. "The room was full," declares Haydon, "Keats and Hazlitt were up in a corner, really rejoicing." One wonders if they really were. Hazlitt's opinion, expressed in the *Edinburgh Review* in the following August, is calm; Keats mentions the event to his sister, but conspicuously without comment.

Keats was in no condition to bear the hurly-burly of

such a scene, yet it does not seem to have been so disastrous as might have been expected. A week later, on April first, he is able to tell Fanny Keats that he is getting better every day although subject to faintness and with the tightness in his chest continuing. About this time, Brown wrote to George Keats, informing him of Keats's hæmorrhage, but adding that he was now much better, and could "walk five miles without weariness." One cannot help fancying that Brown stretched his miles out a bit to relieve George's mind. On Wednesday, April twelfth, Keats again wrote to his sister, telling her that he had been to town "once or twice," but that he was not yet able to bear the fatigue of going to Walthamstow.

Of the April weeks, we know little. There are no hand-sent notes to Fanny Brawne, which looks as though Keats were able to go about to a certain extent, and he completed the revision of his poems and sent them to Taylor who was thereupon to make up the volume. Keats's confidence in his judgment seems to have greatly pleased Taylor. On Thursday, April twenty-seventh, he wrote to Clare: [1]

> "I have got all Keats's MSS. in my hands now to make a Selection out of them for another volume, as I did of yours, and I should like to write an Introduction too, as Editor, to speak about the unfair Reception he has met with from the critics, & especially from the Quarterly Review; but perhaps I had better not."

As April drew to a close, Keats's annual difficulty presented itself as a sinister horror. Brown would let his house for the Summer, as usual, and Keats must find somewhere to go. That Brown should have considered leaving him in the state he was in, particularly when leaving him meant turning him out of house and home as well, speaks

[1] *New Sidelights on Keats, Lamb, and Others. From Letters to J. Clare,* by Edmund Blunden. *The London Mercury,* June, 1921.

not too well for Brown. Ignorance of the true condition of affairs cannot be urged in extenuation of his behaviour, for if any man knew the complete facts, Brown was that man. The callousness of his action needs no emphasizing; it is patent. The motives which actuated him, little as he may have liked to admit them to himself, seem to have been two. The first was that he was heartily tired of the post of sick nurse, and longed to stretch his legs and his lungs by going on another walking trip to Scotland. In short, he wanted to shake the dust of illness from his mind, and be foot-loose and free to do what he pleased. Also, he was expecting Abigail Donohue to bear him a child early in July,[1] and he may have thought it wiser not to be near Keats when that event took place, for fear of receiving an announcement of it, or having to repair suddenly to Ireland. Not that he had any intention of doing so, but it was conceivable that the necessity might arise. Perhaps it did; we know nothing of his movements that Summer.

Brown's second motive was, I fear, purely financial. The arrangements between him and Keats, according to George,[2] were that they should share the expenses of housekeeping. Keats may have paid off the debt he had contracted the year before with the first hundred pounds drawn from Tom's estate, but we know from George that he had other debts to discharge, which debts, according to Taylor,[3] amounted to eighty pounds all told, exclusive of the debt to Taylor himself. When George left to return to America, John had his second hundred pounds, and what-

[1] So the unpublished Memoir by his son says, but from what we know of Brown's doings the Autumn before, it would seem that the date should be June. Under the circumstances, Major Charles Brown may not have known exactly when he was born, or the manuscript may have suffered a copyist's error. From Brown's leaving Wentworth Place a month earlier than was his wont, I am strongly inclined to believe that the date was really June.

[2] Letter to Dilke. Author's Collection.

[3] Unpublished letter from Taylor to his cousin, Michael Drury. February 19, 1821. Author's Collection.

ever, if anything, was left of his first hundred. A meagre amount to meet the expenses of a Winter, to say nothing of the Summer following, for George can hardly have expected to get any return on his money short of a year at least. George told Dilke in 1830 that, when he left London in 1820, a certain sum was due Brown, but that John had the money to pay it, and he believed did pay it. Now what seems most likely is that John could pay it, but, if he did, would simply have been obliged to borrow again, and under the circumstances the debt, or a part of it, was let stand. Certain it is that, after Keats's death, Brown sent in a bill to Abbey of seventy pounds for money owed him by Keats, which bill George eventually discharged. Now the Winter had been a very expensive one, with doctors constantly in attendance, medicine to be bought, and Keats utterly powerless to work, even for the future. *Otho* had brought them in nothing, and Brown found himself considerably concerned about his affairs. Rent for the house would be a present help, and he could not resist so evident a relief.

It is but fair to Brown, however, to realize that he had already done a great deal for Keats, whose illness cannot have helped being a drag even on so buoyant a fellow as he. Keats's pathetic dependence upon him, while gratifying, must also have been wearying. The demands of friendship may be too great to meet, and Brown very likely felt that he needed a little vacation. His character, although sturdy, was not of a very high type, which I think does him complete justice in a nutshell.

To have to move at this juncture was a most unfortunate thing for Keats. To hunt for lodgings took on the proportions of a nightmare, to go and live in them required a fortitude of which he hardly believed himself capable. His nervousness was pitiable. Foolish people, even doctors, suggested foolish things. Somebody advised him to give up poetry and take up the study of mathematics; somebody else — probably, this time, Dr. Bree — urged

Keats to make the voyage to Scotland in the smack with Brown and sail right back again, "for change of exercise and air."

After all, a rescuer was at hand in the person of Hunt, who was living at 13 Mortimer Terrace, Kentish Town, not far from Hampstead. Why not lodge near him, urged Hunt, where, at least, he would be close to friends who could keep an eye on him. It was not a happy solution, the obvious one was his old lodging at Well Walk. But the objection which Keats had felt to that the year before still held good. So Kentish Town was decided upon, and Keats found rooms which would do at 2 Wesleyan Place, and moved into them on either May fifth or sixth.

At first, Keats seems to have really entertained the idea of going up to Scotland in the smack with Brown. He speaks of it as a settled thing to his sister in a letter written on the twenty-first of April. But before the time of departure came, he found he could not make the effort. He did, however, run down as far as Gravesend with Brown, where the friends bade each other good-bye. It was the last time they were ever to see each other, which, fortunately, neither of them in the least foresaw. At Gravesend, Keats left the smack and returned to London. Brown says that the smack sailed from London on May seventh, which was a Sunday, and he ought to know. But Keats evidently expected him to sail on Saturday. In another letter to his sister, written from Wentworth Place on Thursday, May fourth, he says: "Mr. Brown goes on Saturday." As Sunday seems rather an odd day for a boat to sail, I think it possible that Brown confused the dates of his leaving London and his sailing from Gravesend, and that the right date for the London departure should be Saturday, May sixth. Nevertheless it is also quite possible that the smack expected to sail on Saturday, but was delayed until Sunday.

Keats's moving into the Kentish Town lodgings on Fri-

day or Saturday was, without doubt, merely nominal. He probably moved his belongings in, but stayed at Brown's until the last minute. On his return, he went directly to Wesleyan Place, where he seems to have found waiting for him a bunch of flowers from Miss Brawne, sent, obviously, to give his new rooms a home touch. Hunt, too, must have come round immediately to see him and cheer him up. Since sailing vessels were dependent on wind and tide, it is quite probable that Keats spent a night with Brown on board the smack. It was only three and a half hours from Gravesend to London by coach, so that Keats was undoubtedly returned by Monday night at the latest. The sail had done him good. He came back fully determined to make the best of a bad business and get through the Summer with as little friction between himself and himself as possible. An undated letter, which appears to be his first from Kentish Town to Fanny Brawne, shows his mood:

> "My Dearest Girl,
>
> I endeavour to make myself as patient as possible. Hunt amuses me very kindly — besides I have your ring on my finger and your flowers on the table. I shall not expect to see you yet because it would be so much pain to part from you again. When the Books you want come you shall have them. I am very well this afternoon."

Keats was possessed of a strange obsession, without the realization of which it is impossible to understand him. This obsession can only be described as a sort of horror and foreboding which came upon him whenever he was removed a short distance from Fanny Brawne. He often suffered acutely when near her, as near as next door, but these sufferings were more or less spasmodic, and her close proximity kept them from going to any very great extreme. They remained sane, even when acute. Separations of some considerable distance, at least while Keats remained

tolerably well, had the curious effect of lessening his misery, particularly if they were prolonged. We have seen this happen, first at Chichester and Bedhampton, and finally at Winchester. Time and distance worked wonders with him while he was in reasonable health and when his exile was voluntary. What he could not endure were separations amounting to no more than a few miles of distance. A few miles seemed to drive him into an unreasoning frenzy. He saw nothing but their last parting, and seemed utterly unable to occupy himself with a coming meeting. The agony of departure completely obscured the joy of return. Every sort of nightmare took hold of him until he reached a state verging on delirium. As soon as he saw Fanny, tantalizing as her presence was, his abnormal tortures instantly gave way to normal ones, if they did not vanish utterly, as they were quite apt to do. Why he did not realize this, and always seek her when he felt himself getting out of hand, can only be explained by the fact that when the fit was on him his abnormality had reached such a pitch that it was quite out of his power to reason at all. Kentish Town was only a very little way from Hampstead; there was no reason whatever why the daily intercourse should be given up. It was Keats himself who interdicted it, and made of their occasional visits to each other events of huge import which he must nerve himself up to, and the necessary ends to which left colossal regrets. The thing was a phobia, a mild sort of madness, which was all the more shattering because of its hallucinatory character.

Keats had evidently made good resolutions as to his conduct in advance this year, but he comprehended himself on this score so little that here at the outset he lays the gunpowder train which is certain to blow him to bits before long. He tells Fanny Brawne that he shall not expect to see her for some time as he cannot bear the idea of another leave-taking.

A week later, he is still fairly balanced, for he sends her this note, dated merely "Tuesday Afternoon."

> "My dearest Fanny,
>
> For this Week past I have been employed in marking the most beautiful passages in Spenser, intending it for you, and comforting myself in being somehow occupied to give you however small a pleasure. It has lightened my time very much. I am much better. God bless you.
>
> Your affectionate
>
> J. Keats."

Not very effusive, we observe, he evidently feared to give himself a free rein, but calm and steady. In spite of his ban, Keats must have seen Fanny Brawne with considerable frequency during his first six weeks at Kentish Town, for during that interval we have only these two little notes to her and one long letter, and in the mood in which he was we may be quite sure that, had he not seen her often, there would have been more. How much Fanny Brawne valued this Spenser, we have already seen.[1] She cherished the volume for many years until it was unhappily lost on a journey to Germany.

Keats continued to improve a little. On Monday, May fifteenth, he told Brown:

> "You know I was very well in the Smack; I have continued much the same, and am well enough to extract much more pleasure than pain out of the summer, even though I should get no better."

Here Keats makes a joking allusion to a stanza of the *Cap and Bells* which Brown had suggested that he send as an evidence of improved health, for he had written nothing since his hæmorrhage, adding: "Let us hope I may send you more than one in my next."

Hunt's society was perhaps not the worst he could have

[1] See Vol. II, p. 134.

had under the circumstances. Hunt was light, easy, sympathetic, and, above all, cheerful. He seems to have got Keats to show him his recent manuscripts, and, on seeing what poems were not to be included in the new volume, promptly took two of them for his own new paper, the *Indicator*. One of these, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, he printed in the number of Wednesday, May tenth. Keats insisted on its being anonymous, and the signature appended to it was "Caviar," a reference, of course, to Shakespeare's "caviar to the general." Hunt's bungling finger in the alterations the poem underwent before publication has already been referred to.[1]

Keats did not feel up to original composition yet, but he was not entirely idle. There were the proof sheets of the *Lamia* volume to attend to. The contents of the volume had been decided upon at Wentworth Place, and, on the whole, the choice had not been badly made. The three great stories, *Lamia*, *Isabella*, and the *Eve of St. Agnes* were a foregone conclusion, as were the *Odes*, the only one of which to be excluded was the *Ode on Indolence*. These poems gave the volume a certain tone which was neither helped nor hindered by adding to them *Fancy*, *Bards of Passion*, the *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern* and *Robin Hood*. The book concluded with the fragment of *Hyperion*. Posterity, had it had a voice in the matter, would unquestionably have struck out the middle section of short pieces in favour of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, *Meg Merrilies*, and the fragments of the *Ode to Maia* and the *Eve of St. Mark*. But posterity could not be heard from, and the taste of the time was well enough suited by the selection made. Sonnets and other short fugitive poems were, naturally, reserved for a later book.

Keats's wish to have the volume open with the *Eve of St. Agnes* had evidently been overruled, but it would seem that at some period in the discussions there was an idea of

[1] See Vol. II, p. 228.

putting *Hyperion* immediately after *Lamia*, which was abandoned. A title-page with it in that position is copied into Woodhouse's Commonplace Book.[1] Whether or not *Hyperion* should be printed at all appears to have been a moot question for some time. Keats was against it, but the fragment was greatly admired by Woodhouse. Taylor's and Hessey's opinions we do not know, but the Woodhouse Commonplace Book, from the transcripts in which the choice of poems was made, records a vote against *Hyperion*.[2] Whether the vote was unanimous, or whether Woodhouse made a dissenting minority, is not stated. (At least, I suppose from Buxton Forman's not mentioning it that it is not. I have not seen the Commonplace Book myself.) Woodhouse's admiration of the fragment was unbounded. In his notes upon it in his interleaved copy of *Endymion*,[3] from which I have already quoted,[4] he says:

> "The structure of the verse, as well as the subject are colossal. It has an air of calm grandeur about it which is indicative of true power. It is that in poetry which the Elgin & Egyptian marbles are in sculpture."

Holding such an opinion as this, Woodhouse could only have vetoed the inclusion of the poem on the ground that it was unfinished. Somebody was instrumental in causing the negative vote to be set aside, but, if it were not Woodhouse, it was probably not so much a particular person as the general consensus of opinion among Keats's friends working on his publishers, for everyone who had seen *Hyperion* agreed as to its merit.

A little note to Taylor, in which Keats complains that a printing-house change in his text in one of the proofs alters his meaning, is dated by Buxton Forman "11 June," why, I do not know. I own the original and it has no date. That Keats was in a hurry to get his correction in before it

[1] Owned by Sir Sidney Colvin. [2] Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition. [3] In the possession of Mr. W. van R. Whitall of New York. [4] See Vol. II, p. 226.

was too late, seems evident by his having sent it by hand, a fact deduced from the minute care with which the note is addressed — first, in the proper place, to "John Taylor Esq^r. Taylor and Hessey. Booksellers Etc. Fleet Street," and then, on the flap, as a guide to the messenger, "The first Booksellers on the left hand from St. Pauls, past Bridge Street, Black-friars."

Keats was not sanguine about the fate of his book. Some time in June, he wrote to Brown:

> "My book is coming out with very low hopes, though not spirits, on my part. This shall be my last trial; not succeeding, I shall try what I can do in the apothecary line."

In this letter, he tells Brown many things which show not only the temper he was in, but what he had been doing, and more doubtless were here, for there are several blanks in the letter. Brown was careful to edit what letters of Keats he gave to Lord Houghton, unhappily for us. One episode to which Keats refers is a call at someone's house (Brown has carefully deleted the name) where he did not make himself agreeable. With perfect candour, he writes:

> "The fact is I did behave badly; but it is to be attributed to my health, spirits, and the disadvantageous ground I stand on in society. I could go and accommodate matters if I were not too weary of the world . . . I foresee I shall know very few people in the course of a year or two. Men get such different habits that they become as oil and vinegar to one another."

The deleted name should, I think, be Dilke. Keats had been growing out of sympathy with Dilke for some time. Dilke's preoccupation with his young son frankly bored Keats, and the constant discussion of politics made him feel isolated and cold. Added to this was the fact that when Fanny Brawne went to town it was usually to the Dilkes' that she went.

It must have been about this time, or a little before, that Keats's good resolutions slipped their cables and sent him whirling down the stream of feverish passion. Loneliness and depression could no longer be gainsaid, and in their wake, as always with Keats at this period, came blind, torturing jealousy. In this state of mind, he unwisely wrote to Fanny Brawne instead of going at once to see her. The pitiableness of the letter must have been its excuse to Fanny, there could be no other. A delirious man is not responsible for his ravings, and that the effect of his illness was to make him at times delirious, nobody with a grain of medical sense can fail to see. Here is the letter:

"My dearest Girl,

I wrote a letter for you yesterday expecting to have seen your mother.[1] I shall be selfish enough to send it though I know it may give you a little pain, because I wish you to see how unhappy I am for love of you, and endeavour as much as I can to entice you to give up your whole heart to me whose whole existence hangs upon you. You could not step or move an eyelid but it would shoot to my heart — I am greedy of you. Do not think of anything but me. Do not live as if I was not existing. Do not forget me — But have I any right to say you forget me? Perhaps you think of me all day. Have I any right to wish you to be unhappy for me? You would forgive me for wishing it if you knew the extreme passion I have that you should love me — and for you to love me as I do you, you must think of no one but me, much less write that sentence. Yesterday and this morning I have been haunted with a sweet vision — I have seen you the whole time in your shepherdess dress. How my senses have ached at it! How my heart has been devoted to it! How my eyes have been full of tears at it! I[n]deed I think a real love is enough to occupy the widest heart. Your going to town alone when I heard of it was a shock to me — yet I expected it — *promise me you will not for some time till I get better.* Promise me this and fill the

[1] Buxton Forman was unable to identify this letter. I incline to think it was incorporated in this one.

paper full of the most endearing names. If you cannot do so with good will, do my love tell me — say what you think — confess if your heart is too much fasten'd on the world. Perhaps then I may see you at a greater distance, I may not be able to appropriate you so closely to myself. Were you to lose a favorite bird from the cage, how would your eyes ache after it as long as it was in sight; when out of sight you would recover a little. Perhaps if you would, if so it is, confess to me how many things are necessary to you besides me, I might be happier; by being less tantaliz'd. Well may you exclaim, how selfish, how cruel not to let me enjoy my youth! to wish me to be unhappy. You must be so if you love me. Upon my soul I can be contented with nothing else. If you would really what is call'd enjoy yourself at a Party — if you can smile in people's faces, and wish them to admire you *now* — you never have nor ever will love me. I see *life* in nothing but the certainty of your Love — convince me of it my sweetest. If I am not somehow convinced I shall die of agony. If we love we must not live as other men and women do — I cannot brook the wolfsbane of fashion and foppery and tattle — you must be mine to die upon the rack if I want you. I do not pretend to say that I have more feeling than my fellows, but I wish you seriously to look over my letters kind and unkind and consider whether the Person who wrote them can be able to endure much longer the agonies and uncertainties which you are so peculiarly made to create. My recovery of bodily health will be of no benefit to me if you are not mine when I am well. For God's sake save me — or tell me my passion is of too awful a nature for you. Again God bless you.

J. K.

No — my sweet Fanny — I am wrong — I do not wish you to be unhappy — and yet I do, I must while there is so sweet a Beauty — my loveliest, my darling! good bye! I kiss you — O the torments!"

Keats's senses were, as we know, infinitely more acute than most people's; when to his normal abnormality in

this respect was added the sting of sexual desire, goaded to a pathological degree by the nature of his disease, he could no more master himself than he could fly. No wonder the world was dust in his mouth and contact with his kind a burning nausea. These were all symptoms, a fact which we must never lose sight of in thinking of the last few months of Keats's life.

Yet he did his best to "carry on." In the letter to Brown, quoted above, he speaks of going to an exhibition of old English portraits, which he managed to look at with sufficient interest to be able to describe a number of them. He also thinks of really starting to write again:

> "I shall soon begin upon 'Lucy Vaughan Lloyd.'[1] I do not begin composition yet, being willing, in case of a relapse, to have nothing to reproach myself with."

Another thing he mentions is being asked by someone (another deleted name) to supper to meet "Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Haydon, and some more," but he did not go. "I was too careful of my health to risk being out at night," is his ostensible and sufficient reason, but we may doubt whether he was much tempted.

The weather this month had been showery, and not conducive to either cheerfulness or well-being. Then, too, Fanny Keats was getting daily more restive and unhappy. Her relations with the Abbeys, never too comfortable, were approaching the stage of an open quarrel. Mrs. Abbey seems to have had a habit of nagging and complaining, and, worse than all, of throwing the blame of Fanny's fancied faults on family characteristics. Fanny Keats was a high-spirited girl, and her position was galling in the extreme. Just before Keats had left Wentworth Place, she had written to him of her inability to endure any more, and had begged him to do something to help her. But what could he do? Her seventeenth birthday was not until

[1] His projected *nom-de-plume* for the *Cap and Bells*. See Vol. II, p. 365.

June, and Abbey was her legal guardian, besides, his and his wife's offenses were not of a kind which would have removed her from his jurisdiction. Keats, ill as he was, was utterly at a loss. All he could do was to beg her to be patient, the situation could not last forever, and explain his own condition to her, assuring her at the same time that as soon as he was well enough he would do all in his power to aid her, but that in the meantime she must get along as best she could.

On Thursday, the twenty-second of June, Keats received a letter from his sister. What the letter contained, we can have no idea, but it appears to have asked him to go to town at once, either to see her or Abbey. Keats instantly prepared to go, but just as he was starting he was taken with a slight spitting of blood. This put an end to his going to town, but he did not go to bed, nor even, it appears, call in a doctor, and by the afternoon he was able to crawl round to Hunt's. He simply had to have some sort of companionship, he could not sit alone and think. We have a contemporary glimpse of this afternoon from Shelley's friend, Mrs. Gisborne, who wrote in her private journal on Friday, June twenty-third:

> [1] "Yesterday evening we drank tea at Mr. Hunt's... Mr. Keats was introduced to us the same evening; he had lately been ill also, and spoke but little; the Endymion was not mentioned, this person might not be its author; but on observing his countenance and his eyes I persuaded myself that he was the very person. We talked of music, and of Italian and English singing; I mentioned that Farinelli had the art of taking breath imperceptibly, while he continued to hold one single note, alternately swelling out and diminishing the power of his voice like waves. Keats observed that this must in some degree be painful to the hearer, as when a diver descends into the hidden depths of the sea you feel an apprehension lest he may never rise

[1] Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

again. These may not be his exact words as he spoke in a low tone."

Doubtless the idea of this feat gave Keats the feeling of suffocation he had experienced in his first hæmorrhage, and which seemed now once more an imminent possibility. Keats should have been at home and in bed, but can we wonder that he could not stay in his strange, unsympathetic lodgings and face this renewed discouragement alone? Yet going out was disastrous. On his return, he had another attack of blood-spitting and a doctor was called.

Keats's new physician was Dr. George Darling, a general practitioner who lived in Russell Square. Dr. Darling was Taylor's physician, and he had a large clientele among literary men and artists. Among his patients were Hazlitt, Clare, Wilkie, and Haydon, he was also a friend of Sir James Mackintosh. He belonged, in fact, to that little group which focussed to a considerable extent in the back parlour of Taylor and Hessey's shop. It was quite natural, therefore, that Keats should turn to him, particularly if he had lost confidence in the doctors who had looked after him before, as was very likely the case.

Dr. Darling was decidedly alarmed at the state in which he found Keats. Keats minimized his diagnosis to his sister, telling her that the doctor said he had nothing material to fear. Perhaps Dr. Darling had kept something back from Keats himself, but Hunt seems to have been thoroughly informed. At any rate, Hunt, although ill himself of a "bilious fever," at once begged Keats to give up his lodgings and move to Mortimer Terrace where he and his wife would nurse him to the best of their ability. It was a forlorn alternative from Keats's point of view. The Hunts, though kind, were feckless people, the house was full of children and the housekeeping often a riot of confusion. Yet Keats saw, and rightly, that he was far too ill to be alone, and on the next day, Friday, the move was

accomplished and Keats installed as an inmate of Hunt's house.

However lonely and haunted Keats had been at Wesleyan Place, it was bound to be far worse at Hunt's. There is no loneliness so great as that experienced in the midst of people, and no haunting comparable to thoughts incessantly present but entirely unshared by the other inmates of a house.

The move to Hunt's did not stop the hæmorrhages, as we see by a letter from Hessey to Clare,[1] written on Tuesday, June twenty-seventh:

> "You will be sorry to hear that poor Keats is very unwell. The sudden change in the weather has brought on a return of his old alarming complaint — & he has been spitting blood for several days. Dr. Darling expresses great Apprehensions for him."

Three days later, Hessey has no better news to report. On Friday, the thirtieth, he again writes to Clare:[2]

> "You will receive with this a copy of Keats's New Volume & you will perhaps read it with still more interest when you hear the Author is very unwell. A Blood Vessel in his Lungs broke last week and he has been under Dr. Darling's care ever since. By copious bleedings and active medicines the evil is at present reduced, but the prospect of its return & the evidence it affords of the state of his Constitution make me feel the greatest concern for him."

Keats's book was coming out in a few days, but he was too ill and too indifferent to be consulted in any way about it. This was particularly unfortunate as Taylor and Woodhouse had begun to be a little worried over *Hyperion*. Keats had not wanted the poem printed, and after all it was only a fragment, perhaps it needed an apology, or, at

[1] *New Sidelights on Keats, Lamb, and Others. From Letters to J. Clare*, by Edmund Blunden. *The London Mercury*. June, 1921.

[2] *Ibid.*

least, an explanation. The more they thought of it, the more they felt that it did. Taylor had adhered to his resolution not to write an Introduction, moreover he had gone to Bath "quite exhausted," nevertheless something must be done. In the end, either he in Bath, or Woodhouse in London, ventured to insert a brief note in the beginning of the book. This *Advertisement*, dated "Fleet Street, June 26, 1820," was a serious blunder. It was also, with no such intention, an impertinence, since Keats was not consulted about it. His opinion of it will be given in a moment, but to appreciate his annoyance one must know the *Advertisement* itself. I quote it therefore:

> "If any apology be thought necessary for the appearance of the unfinished poem of HYPERION, the publishers beg to state that they alone are responsible, as it was printed at their particular request, and contrary to the wish of the author. The poem was intended to be of equal length with ENDYMION, but the reception given to that work discouraged the author from proceeding."

The book was ready for distribution on Friday, June thirtieth, as we have seen, and I believe it to have been published on Monday, July third. Reynolds, writing to Taylor on Tuesday the fourth, says:

> [1] "Poor Keats! You cannot think how much pain Hessey's account has given me: — for if ever there was a worthy & clever fellow on Earth — he is that fellow. His book looks like an angel & talks like one too."

It seems from this as though Reynolds must have dropped in at 93 Fleet Street some time between Friday and Monday and found Hessey, who told him of Keats's attack, at the same time giving him the new volume.

Keats would have received his copies as soon as any were ready, and we can imagine his feelings when the *Advertisement* caught his eye. He, who was proud to a

[1] Unpublished letter in Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

fault where the public was concerned, must have felt the reading of these few ill-advised lines like the pouring of vinegar into an open wound. That illness had not broken his fighting spirit is made abundantly clear by an inscription in a copy of the book[1] which he sent to Mr. Davenport, a Hampstead neighbour. In this copy, before the *Advertisement*, Keats wrote: "This is none of my doing. I was ill at the time," and at the end he put: "This is a lie."

Why Keats did not write this same denial in all his presentation copies, it is not easy to understand. But I have never seen it in any other, and I have examined not a few. For what reason Mr. Davenport was singled out as the recipient of this unique confidence, we shall never know. Probably some conversation not recorded was the cause. One would have supposed that Keats might have wanted Hazlitt to know the truth, but Hazlitt's copy[2] has on its fly-leaf only the pleasant and unimpassioned legend: "To W^m^ Hazlitt Esq^re^ with the Author's sincere respects." The inscription in the copy given to Fanny Brawne[3] is extraordinarily laconic. Keats could not bear to write anything personal in a book which might be seen by others. His secrecy where his love was concerned was carried to an alarming point, and it is the answer to Fanny Brawne's well-known, but quite misunderstood, remark to Dilke ten years after Keats's death, that "the kindest act would be to let him rest for ever in the obscurity to which circumstances have condemned him." Fanny Brawne was not referring to Keats's poetry when she wrote this, she was thinking of, and replying to, a request made to her by Brown in 1829. Brown was proposing to write a Life of Keats and had asked her to permit him to publish one of Keats's last letters to him which was almost entirely about her, although her name was not mentioned. Keats's letter will be given in the next chapter, and

[1] Author's Collection. [2] Day Collection. [3] Author's Collection.

my readers can judge whether any woman could have permitted such a letter to appear when she knew how agonizingly the author of it had begged her not to let any detail of their relations, even the bare fact of their mutual love, pass her lips. Well as she understood that Keats's extreme sensitiveness on the subject was the result of the morbidness due to disease, the injunction to her was sacred. She knew, as no one else did, how Keats had dreaded publicity, and in this remark (an answer, undoubtedly, to some farther suggestion of a biography) we see her protecting him even after death. The expression of her feeling was unfortunate, certainly, but that it was misleading was exactly what Keats would have wished. She had read his letters to her; Dilke had not. It need not surprise us, then, that all he wrote in her copy of the *Lamia* volume was, in his most careful hand: "F. B. from J. K." The book, however, is full bound in diamond-tooled calf, a habit of Keats's with very special copies of his various works.

In the beginning, Taylor and Hessey seem to have had some idea of printing the poems in the *Lamia* volume as separate books or pamphlets. On the back of one of the pages of a manuscript of Lamia,[1] a manuscript in Keats's handwriting, is a faint pencil memorandum (not by Keats) to this effect:

"Isabella 500 32
Lamia 600 35
St. Agnes 500 29

This day are published in 8 vo. form 3 shillings each Five Poems:

1 Isabella
2 Lamia
3 St. Agnes
4 Poems, Miscellaneous
5 Hyperion, a fragment.

The whole in 1 Vol. 8vo., price 12 & 6."

[1] Bemis Collection.

The *Lamia* volume, when it appeared, sold for seven shillings and sixpence; the separate pamphlets were, it is evident, abandoned altogether, but one would like to know why they were ever contemplated.

Taylor's enthusiasm for his new publication was unbounded. Woodhouse had succeeded in inoculating his friend with much of his own belief in Keats's genius. Writing to a relative just before the appearance of the volume, Taylor speaks his mind about both it and its author in no unmeasured terms:

> [1] "Next week Keats's new Volume of Poems will be published, and if it does not sell well, I think nothing will ever sell well again. I am sure of this, that for Poetic Genius there is not his equal living, and I would compare him against anyone with either Milton or Shakespeare for Beauties."

Hessey was equally pleased with the firm's latest venture. He had spoken of it in both of his letters to Clare, in the first telling him:

> "For my part, I think no single volume of Poems ever gave me more real delight on the whole than I have received from this."

And in the second:

> "I think the simplicity of Isabella will please you much — Hyperion is full of the most sublime poetical images, & the small Poems delight me very much."

Keats was certainly lucky to have such men as Taylor and Hessey for his publishers, particularly when we add to them the firm's running mate, Richard Woodhouse. I am, indeed, prepared to say that, notwithstanding the less close intimacy of their relation, Woodhouse was the most uniformly worthy and disinterested of all Keats's friends.

[1] Quoted in Sir Sidney Colvin's *Life of Keats*, from information supplied by a great-niece of Taylor's.

His tact and generosity cannot be too strongly insisted upon, but not until the discovery of a number of his letters in the manuscript volume I have called the *Woodhouse Book* in the Morgan Library did we know their full extent. Woodhouse seems to have imbued at least one of his sisters with his own feeling for Keats's poetry, if we may judge by a letter[1] from her to her brother in which she speaks of "that beautiful and grand Sonnet to the 'Sea.'" She must have read the poem in a transcript made by Woodhouse, since it was unpublished. As soon as the *Lamia* volume was out, Woodhouse dispatched a copy of it to Taylor at Bath to give to her, or perhaps to another sister. The letter[2] to Taylor which mentions this copy was written from 93 Fleet Street, where Woodhouse was taking tea with Hessey, and at the end of it there is this pleasant piece of information:

> "Hessey has subscribed 160 of Keats — & sold *one Endymion* today. So that the bard's works begin to get in request."

This letter is dated simply "Friday," but I believe it to have been written on June thirtieth, and that the *Lamia* sent to Bath was one of the advance copies. The books subscribed by Hessey evidently referred to copies to be delivered on the following Monday, when the volume would be actually published and on sale.

We have seen that on Friday, June twenty-third, Keats moved over to Hunt's house. Hunt was making up the *Indicator* for the following week, and writing for it a paper entitled *A Now, Descriptive of a Hot Day*. Keats liked the paper, and, says Hunt:[3] "He was with me while I was writing and reading it to him, and contributed one or two of the passages." Several passages in this paper are very like Keats; of two of these I have so little doubt that I give them here:

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography*.

> "Now rooms with the sun upon them become intolerable; and the apothecary's apprentice, with a bitterness beyond aloes, thinks of the pond he used to bathe in at school . . .
>
> [Of boys] Now also they make suckers of leather, and bathe all day long in rivers and ponds, and follow the fish into their cool corners, and say millions of 'MY eyes!' at 'tittle-bats.'"

It is quite characteristic of Keats to be able to do this sort of thing even when he was in reality depressed beyond measure. Besides, such reminiscences as this, such recalling of the pleasures of his boyhood, is on a par with his musings on the field flowers, confided to Rice a few months before.[1] This paper came out in the *Indicator* for June twenty-eighth, and in the same number Hunt printed Keats's *As Hermes once took to his feathers light*, again over the signature "Caviar."

By the second week of July, Dr. Darling seems to have decided that a more expert opinion than his was needed, that somebody who might be considered a specialist should be called in consultation. The physician summoned was Dr. William Lambe. Dr. Lambe was, like Dr. Bree, a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and he was also a most kind-hearted and generous man. Considered a bit of a fanatic, being a pronounced vegetarian, his practice was not large, so that he lived out of town, at the same time maintaining a consulting room at 2 Bedford (now Theobald's) Road, Bedford Row, where he saw patients three times a week. Why Dr. Bree was not sent for was probably because, in Keats's opinion, he had not been too successful in his treatment of the last attack, and also because Keats's exchequer was not in a condition to afford him. Dr. Lambe, on the other hand, often gave his services to people who had not the money to pay for them, and was, moreover, the author of a work on the *Cure of Constitutional Diseases*, with particular reference to scrof-

[1] See Vol. II, p. 395.

ula, consumption, cancer, and gout, a fact which gave him a strong recommendation.

Dr. Lambe recognized the seriousness of Keats's condition immediately and made no secret of his opinion. He was explicit in one thing. Keats could not survive another Winter in England, he must somehow contrive to go to Italy. This was a terrible decree, but Dr. Lambe would allow of no alternative. Truly, to Keats, it seemed as though horror after horror were being laid upon his head. Where turn, where look for any least brightness to lighten his gloom? Again we have recourse to Mrs. Gisborne, who has painted for us an unforgettable picture of Keats at this time. Once more I quote from her journal:

> "Wednesday 12 July. We drank tea at Mr. Hunt's; I was much pained by the sight of poor Keats, under sentence of death from Dr. Lamb. He never spoke and looks emaciated."

It seems to have been immediately after this that Mr. Gisborne wrote to Shelley his dismal account of Keats, which account induced Shelley to invite Keats to stay with him at Pisa. We shall reach this episode in due time.

The situation was desolate in the extreme, and Keats's rapidly increasing delirium, which he could still conceal from his friends, but not from Fanny Brawne, made it worse. The letters written to her from Hunt's house are simply the expression of a mortal agony. Keats finds cause for jealousy and torment in the most innocent visits. He forgets entirely the long weeks of her voluntary confinement at Wentworth Place, and fails to understand that now that she could not see him at all hours she must, if she would preserve her health and sanity, lead a normal life as far as possible. Doubtless her mother — who, nevertheless, loved Keats dearly, as he did her — encouraged Fanny to go about a little. Much as she loved Keats, Mrs. Brawne loved her daughter more, and she could not help seeing

that the engagement was a most unfortunate thing. For a girl not yet twenty to be engaged to a dying man is one of the profoundest tragedies which life can mete out. At the bottom of her heart, Mrs. Brawne must have hoped and prayed that something would happen to end the engagement; but Fanny had a determined will and she was very much in love, and Mrs. Brawne was powerless. She followed the course which her wisdom and comprehending affection dictated, she did nothing but what was kind as regarded both Keats and Fanny, and waited. We know her attitude from a letter[1] written by either Mr. or Mrs. Dilke to a correspondent whose name is not given:

> "It is quite a settled thing between John Keats and Miss Brawne — God help them. The mother says she cannot prevent it, and that her only hope is that it will go off. He don't like anyone to look at or speak to her."

For some reason or other, Keats did not see as much of Miss Brawne at Hunt's house as he had done when he was at Wesleyan Place. Probably it was his own idea to keep her away so that the Hunts should have no cause to remark upon the frequency of her visits. Mrs. Brawne came, however, as we see by the following letter. I shall give only extracts from these letters from Mortimer Terrace, they will tell us all we need to know. None of them are dated or postmarked; I suppose they were sent by hand. The order in which Buxton Forman places them is implicit in the letters themselves.

> "I am tormented day and night. They talk of my going to Italy. 'Tis certain I shall never recover if I am to be so long separate from you: yet with all this devotion to you I cannot persuade myself into any confidence of you. Past experience connected with the fact of my long separation from you gives me agonies which are scarcely to be talked of. When your mother comes I shall be very sudden and

[1] *Papers of a Critic*, by Charles Wentworth Dilke.

expert in asking her whether you have been to Mrs. Dilke's, for she might say no to make me easy. I am literally worn to death, which seems my only recourse. I cannot forget what has pass'd. What? nothing with a man of the world, but to me dreadful . . . When you were in the habit of flirting with Brown you would have left off, could your own heart have felt one half of one pang mine did. Brown is a good sort of Man — he did not know he was doing me to death by inches. I feel the effect of every one of those hours in my side now; and for that cause, though he has done me many services, though I know his love and friendship for me, though at this moment I should be without pence were it not for his assistance, I will never see or speak to him until we are both old men, if we are to be . . . You will call this madness. I have heard you say that it was not unpleasant to wait a few years — you have amusements — your mind is away — you have not brooded over one idea as I have, and how should you? . . . Any party, anything to fill up the day has been enough. How have you pass'd this month? Who have you smil'd with? All this may seem savage to you. You do not feel as I do — you do not know what it is to love — one day you may — your time is not come . . . I appeal to you by the blood of that Christ you believe in: Do not write to me if you have done anything this month which it would have pained me to have seen. You may have altered — if you have not — if you still behave in dancing rooms and other societies as I have seen you — I do not want to live — if you have done so I wish this coming night may be my last. I cannot live without you, and not only you but *chaste you; virtuous you*. The Sun rises and sets, the day passes, and you follow the bent of your inclination to a certain extent — you have no conception of the quantity of miserable feeling that passes through me in a day. — Be serious! Love is not a plaything — and again do not write unless you can do it with a crystal conscience. I would sooner die for want of you than —"

The insult in the last part of this letter is the one and only time in his life, as far as we know it, in which Keats's

taste, and his sense of chivalry, permitted him to do a really abominable thing. The ravings of delirium alone can be an excuse for it. The utter nonsense of it can have been its only palliative to Fanny Brawne. What she bore with in these letters cannot be overstated. Her pity must have been extreme to tolerate such selfishness and cruelty. But Fanny Brawne realized, as have too few of Keats's critics, that this was illness, illness so fevered and transforming that the man who suffered it was not responsible for what he said. If only we had some of her letters to him! He brooded and brooded over them until he read monstrous things into her simplest expression. That she may not have discovered how to temper herself to his comprehension, is quite possible. Another woman might have found the key. Perhaps, but I doubt it. Love, misery, and disease drove Keats temporarily mad, and the effect would have been the same whoever he had loved. And how many women would have, could have, stood such vituperation with Fanny Brawne's tenderness and sweetness? Yet even she seems to have resented this last letter a little, as we see by the next:

> "You complain of my illtreating you in word, thought and deed — I am sorry, — at times I feel bitterly sorry that I ever made you unhappy — my excuse is that those words have been wrung from me by the sharpness of my feelings. At all events and in any case I have been wrong; could I believe that I did it without any cause, I should be the most sincere of Penitents. I could give way to my repentant feelings now, I could recant all my suspicions, I could mingle with you heart and Soul though absent, were it not for some parts of your Letters. Do you suppose it possible I could ever leave you? You know what I think of myself and what of you. You know that I should feel how much it was my loss and how little yours. My friends laugh at you! I know some of them — when I know them all I shall never think of them again as friends or even acquaintance. My friends have behaved well to me in

every instance but one, and there they have become tattlers, and inquisitors into my conduct: spying upon a secret I would rather die than share it with any body's confidence. For this I cannot wish them well, I care not to see any of them again. If I am the Theme, I will not be the Friend of idle Gossips. Good gods what a shame it is our Loves should be so put into the microscope of a Coterie. Their laughs should not affect you (I may perhaps give you reasons some day for these laughs, for I suspect a few people to hate me well enough, *for reasons I know of*, who have pretended a great friendship for me) when in competition with one, who if he never should see you again would make you the Saint of his memory. These Laughers, who do not like you, who envy you for your Beauty, who would have God-bless'd me from you for ever: who were plying me with disencouragements with respect to you eternally. People are revengeful — do not mind them — do nothing but love me — if I knew that for certain life and health will in such event be a heaven, and death itself will be less painful. I long to believe in immortality. I shall never be able to bid you an entire farewell. If I am destined to be happy with you here — how short is the longest Life. I wish to believe in immortality — I wish to live with you for ever. Do not let my name ever pass between you and those laughers; if I have no other merit than the great Love for you, that were sufficient to keep me sacred and unmentioned in such society . . . Your name never passes my Lips — do not let mine pass yours. Those People do not like me. After reading my Letter you even then wish to see me. I am strong enough to walk over — but I dare not. I shall feel so much pain in parting with you again. My dearest love, I am afraid to see you; I am strong, but not strong enough to see you. Will my arm be ever round you again, and if so shall I be obliged to leave you again? My sweet Love! I am happy whilst I believe your first Letter. Let me be but certain that you are mine heart and soul, and I could die more happily than I could otherwise live."

What Keats had said about Brown was said in the petulance of agony. His mind was a prey to a phantasmagoria

in which everything was distorted. He loved Brown at this period more than he loved anybody else except Fanny Brawne, and would have given the world to be back with him at Wentworth Place. What he says in this letter about the gossips, on the other hand, had more than a modicum of truth in it. Certain of his friends did not like Miss Brawne, and had done their best to pry him away from her. The Reynolds family seem to have been the chief aggressors in this, and particularly the Reynolds girls. In their case, there is little doubt that vanity played a considerable part in their attitude. Not that any one of the three was in love with Keats, but that they so evidently failed in interest for him after he met Fanny Brawne. To be sure, this interest had already begun to weaken before Keats met Miss Brawne, but they may not have realized that, and, even if they had, they resented the appearance of another woman who not only captivated him at once, but held him captive. It was not long after this time that Miss Reynolds wrote to Mrs. Dilke of Keats's going to Rome, and in her letter she said: "absence may probably weaken, if not break off, a connexion which has been a most unhappy one for him." Reynolds himself is more violent in expression, as we shall see later, but he was evidently less open on the subject to Keats, who cherished their old friendship to the end although he does not seem to have seen much of Reynolds this Summer, and he never wrote to him again. Reynolds's brilliant pugilistic joke, *The Fancy*, purporting to be by a certain "Peter Corcoran," appeared shortly before the *Lamia* volume. Keats must have read and liked it, if he had not already done so in manuscript, but we have no record of his opinion. One thing in this letter must not be overlooked: the absolute injunction to secrecy laid upon Fanny Brawne. How could she, after this, accede to Brown's request, or give her sanction to any biography of her lover, which would necessarily, even if anonymously, include her relation to him?

The third and last letter needs no comment:

"I wish you could invent some means to make me at all happy without you. Every hour I am more and more concentrated in you; every thing else tastes like chaff in my Mouth. I feel it almost impossible to go to Italy — the fact is I cannot leave you, and shall never taste one minute's content until it pleases chance to let me live with you for good . . . Mr. Dilke came to see me yesterday, and gave me a very great deal more pain than pleasure. I shall never be able any more to endure the society of any of those who used to meet at Elm Cottage[1] and Wentworth Place. The last two years taste like brass upon my Palate. If I cannot live with you I will live alone. I do not think my health will improve much while I am separated from you. For all this I am averse to seeing you — I cannot bear flashes of light and return into my glooms again. I am not so unhappy now as I should be if I had seen you yesterday. To be happy with you seems such an impossibility! it requires a luckier Star than mine! it will never be . . . I am sickened at the brute world which you are smiling with. I hate men, and women more. I see nothing but thorns for the future — wherever I may be next winter, in Italy or nowhere, Brown will be living near you with his indecencies. I see no prospect of any rest. Suppose me in Rome — well, I should there see you as in a magic glass going to and from town at all hours,————————I wish you could infuse a little confidence of human nature into my heart. I cannot muster any — the world is too brutal for me — I am glad there is such a thing as the grave — I am sure I shall never have any rest till I get there. At any rate I will indulge myself by never seeing any more Dilke or Brown or any of their Friends. I wish I was either in your arms full of faith or that a Thunder bolt would strike me."

While this anguish of jealousy and despair was putting Keats to the torture day and night, he was acting with the

[1] Probably the house on Downshire Hill in which the Brawnes lived between their temporary occupancy of Wentworth Place in the Summer of 1818, and their permanent return to it in the early Spring of 1819.

utmost courage as far as his visible life went. Of that visible life, we have a little sketch in a letter to his sister:

> "Mr. Hunt does everything in his power to make the time pass as agreeably with me as possible. I read the greatest part of the day, and generally take two half hour walks a day up and down the terrace which is very much pester'd with cries, ballad singers, and street music."

As one reads this, one cannot help one's spleen rising, unjustly perhaps, against Brown who had bereft him of the quiet garden at Wentworth Place.

Another picture of this period has been given us by Mrs. Charles Cowden Clarke, who, before her marriage, was Mary Victoria Novello, the eldest daughter of the musical composer, Vincent Novello. Novello was an intimate friend of Leigh Hunt's, and the two families were on the most familiar terms. Miss Novello saw Keats at Mortimer Terrace, and many years later wrote of her inability to forget "the last time I saw him, half-reclining on some chairs that formed a couch for him when he was staying at Leigh Hunt's house, just before leaving England for Italy." Mrs. Hunt, who was considered very clever at cutting silhouettes, did one of Keats in this position, reading the paper, which brings him vividly before us. Although not a good likeness, the silhouette is a pathetic and important record of the seven weeks spent at Mortimer Terrace, when, he wrote to Brown later: "I was a prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day."

Keats seems to have become greatly altered by this time; Severn, who went to see him in the second week of July, was much disturbed at the way he looked, and wrote to Haslam:

> [1] "His appearance is shocking and now reminds me of poor Tom and I have been inclined to think him in the same way. For himself — he makes sure of it — and seems

[1] Colvin.

> prepossessed that he cannot recover — now I seem more than ever *not* to think so and I know you will agree with me when you see him — are you aware another volume of Poems was published last week — in which is 'Lovely Isabel — poor simple Isabel'? I have been delighted with this volume and think it will even please the million."

Severn was gentle, kind, and enthusiastic, but he was also shallow and incurably, baselessly, optimistic. It was characteristic of him to like the *Pot of Basil* — easily the poorest of the stories in the *Lamia* volume — so much as to single it out for mention.

Once only does Keats seem to have lost his control before Hunt. Hunt had taken him for a drive to Hampstead, and, most unwisely one would think, the friends got out of the carriage and sat for a while on a bench in Well Walk. Well Walk and its benches were so closely associated with Tom that Keats was entirely overcome. "He suddenly," says Hunt,[1] "turned upon me, his eyes swimming with tears, and told me he was dying of a broken heart." Hunt was startled, this was so unlike the Keats he had known; "he must have been wonderfully excited to make such a confession, for his spirit was lofty to a degree of pride," is Hunt's amazed comment made three years after the event. This side of Keats, Hunt had never seen before, and was only to see once again, in the wake of a most unpleasant occurrence.

On Thursday, August tenth, a letter from Fanny Brawne was delivered at Hunt's door. Keats had gone to his room to lie down, and Mrs. Hunt, being engaged with one of her numerous progeny, told the maid to take the letter to Keats. This the woman did not do. She was evidently on the eve of departure, for, on the next day, Friday, she left, and on Saturday Hunt's ten-year-old boy, Thornton, produced the note with the seal broken, at the same time telling his mother that the servant had given it to him

[1] *Wishing-Cap Papers*, by Leigh Hunt. 1823.

before she went with injunctions not to show it to his mother until the next day. Mrs. Gisborne relates the whole story in her journal, adding that the note "contained not a word of the least consequence," but that "Poor Keats was affected by this inconceivable circumstance beyond what can be imagined; he wept for several hours, and resolved, notwithstanding Hunt's entreaties, to leave the house; he went to Hampstead that same evening."

Mrs. Gisborne's lofty "not a word of the least consequence" rings jarringly enough across the very real tragedy that such a happening could not help being to Keats. It was a hideous shock which no amount of apologies nor reasoning could avert the consequences of. We know, as well as though we had been present, the almost demented state in which he must have arrived at the Brawnes', for, in his agitation, he seems to have gone directly to Wentworth Place. He had to see Fanny; but his intention was, after seeing her, to go at once to the Bentleys' in Well Walk and settle that night in his old rooms there. But here Mrs. Brawne showed her spirit, affection, and maternal instinct. She would not hear of Keats's leaving the house. He must, and should, stay right where he was, and she and Fanny would take care of him so long as he remained in England.

What the relief of this decision, taken entirely out of his hands, must have been to Keats, we can very well imagine. Under the same roof with Fanny again, but more, far more, within the same walls, shut in by the same front door! Fanny at night only a partition away, or, at most, only across an entry. Fanny there in the morning, all day, and the next night. The days in which he would know her every occupation; if she went out, where she went and why; on her return, whom she had seen, and then to hear her say how little she had cared for them. If, on his better days, she aroused his desire for her to an aching pitch, even that was easier than the same discomfort fed only by phantoms, with the tortures of suspicion added. No sus-

picion could survive their daily intercourse. Fanny, seen as an inmate of the same house could not help seeing her, proved to be just an attractive young girl, doing what all young girls do, and constantly ready to sit with him, talk to him, read to him, and love him as dearly and evidently as circumstances permitted. All that their engagement could sanction, Keats received; his quarrel henceforward was with fate, not with Fanny. The constant presence of Mrs. Brawne, too, was an inexpressible support. We know how sorely Keats had needed a mother. Mrs. Brawne began to assume that relation in his mind. The sick, tortured soul had found succour and healing at last. At last, but not to the last; Keats knew only too well that there was a term to this peace, that beyond the quiet walls of Wentworth Place lay Italy and exile, an exile which he could not even hope would end otherwise than with death. Recovery he believed to be impossible, and, without recovery, of what value was life to him? He had lost every vestige of religious belief, even the consoling doctrine of immortality, which had given him some small measure of comfort after Tom's death, had gone. There was nothing beyond, and the present was slowly seeping between his desperately clutching fingers like smooth, lapsing oil. No, in this haven of rest and security Keats could know no real rest nor security. His very happiness was unhappy with the tainted breath of change; yet, for all this, there was happiness. He told Severn afterwards that the most peaceful days he had ever known were those passed at the Brawnes'.

On Monday, August fourteenth, Keats felt well enough to attend to some of his correspondence. He wrote to his sister, acquainting her with his present whereabouts, and telling her the reason for his leaving the Hunts. As to his health, he is quite explicit:

> "I am excessively nervous: a person I am not quite used to entering the room half chokes me. 'Tis not yet Consumption I believe, but it would be were I to remain in this

climate all Winter: so I am thinking of either voyaging or travelling to Italy."

For news, he relates the following:

"Yesterday I received an invitation from Mr. Shelley, a gentleman residing at Pisa, to spend the Winter with him: if I go I must be away in a Month or even less. I am glad you like the Poems, you must hope with me that time and health will produce you some more. This is the first morning I have been able to sit to the paper and have many letters to write if I can manage them. God Bless you my dear Sister."

Shelley's letter has often been quoted, I will, then, merely say that Mr. Gisborne's account of Keats had left no doubt that Keats had consumption; we see, therefore, that Dr. Lambe had made this quite clear — if not as a fact, at least as a probability — to the Hunts, although he may not have spoken so plainly to Keats himself. Shelley's invitation was couched in just the right cheerful tone. Nothing could have been nicer or kinder than his attitude. Of *Endymion*, which he had had sent out to him from London by his publishers, having left the copy which Keats had given him[1] behind, he wrote:

[2] "I have lately read your 'Endymion' again, & ever with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This people in general will not endure, & that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. — I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will. I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books. — 'Prometheus Unbound' I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter. 'The Cenci' I hope you have already received."

Keats's reply, try as he would, lacked both the ease and

[1] Bemis Collection.
[2] Corrected from the original letter. Author's Collection.

the courtesy of Shelley's letter. He neither distinctly accepted nor declined Shelley's invitation, and rather tactlessly offered some gratuitous advice on Shelley's manner of work. He was sensibly touched by Shelley's action, but Shelley as a poet was no more sympathetic to him than he had ever been.

"My dear Shelley,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost overoccupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of — the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now-a-days is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have 'self-concentration' — selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of *Prometheus* every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript,

or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for the hope of gain; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley. In the hope of soon seeing you,

I remain most sincerely yours,

JOHN KEATS.

That any ulterior motive in a work of art acts as an alloy to the purity of the metal, Keats was well aware. An artist's chief loyalty is to his genius; his selfishness is a sacrifice made upon the altar of his dedication. In considering poetry its own ultimate, Keats was more purely an artist than Shelley, as he could not help knowing.

Another of the letters of this Monday was to Taylor. In it, Keats says:

"This journey to Italy wakes me at daylight every morning, and haunts me horribly. I shall endeavour to go, though it be with the sensation of marching up against a battery. The first step towards it is to know the expense of a journey and a year's residence, which if you will ascertain for me, and let me know early, you will greatly serve me. I have more to say but must desist, for every line I write increases the tightness of my chest, and I have many more to do. I am convinced this sort of thing does not continue for nothing. If you can come, with any of our friends, do."

The "many more letters" resolved themselves down to one little note to Haydon, at least we know of no others. Haydon had, some days before, asked Keats to return a copy of Chapman's *Homer* which Keats had borrowed. The book could not be found and, in the end, Keats was obliged to buy another. In this note, Keats refers to an

earlier one which seems not to have been preserved. Here he informs Haydon of the projected Italian journey, says his hopes and spirits are better, and adds: "I shall be here for a little time and at home all day and every day . . . Hoping to see you shortly," etc.

Haydon went, but the visit was far from a success. Haydon appears to have been in one of his most self-righteous moods, full of the consolations of religion and utterly obtuse to the fact that they were no consolations to Keats. Here is his account of the afternoon:

> "The last time I ever saw him was at Hampstead, lying in a white bed with a book, hectic and on his back, irritable at his weakness and wounded at the way he had been used. He seemed to be going out of life with a contempt for the world and no hopes of the other. I told him to be calm, but he muttered that if he did not soon get better he would destroy himself. I tried to reason against such violence, but it was no use; he grew angry, and I went away deeply affected."

It is a strange commentary on Haydon's exhortations that, in the end, it was he, not Keats, who died by his own hand.

On either this Monday, or on the next day, Tuesday, Keats wrote again to Taylor:

> "I do not think I mentioned anything of a Passage to Leghorn by Sea. Will you join that to your enquiries, and, if you can, give a peep at the Berth if the Vessel is in our river."

An enclosure in this letter proved to be Keats's will — a pathetic little document, for all he had to bequeath were a few books, a few fallacious hopes, and some debts. Taylor, careful, kindly, and punctilious, endorsed the letter as follows:

> "Inclosed in this Letter I received a Testamentary Paper in John Keats's Handwriting without date on which

I have endorsed a memorandum to this effect for the purpose of identifying it & for better security it is hereunto annexed.

JOHN TAYLOR.

22 Sept 1820."

The endorsement on the will is:

"N.B. on the 14th August or the 15th 1820 I received this paper which is in John Keats's Handwriting inclosed in the annexed Letter which came by the 3dy post.[1]

JOHN TAYLOR.

22 Sept 1820."

This is the will itself:

"My Chest of Books divide among my friends.

In case of my death this scrap of paper may be serviceable in your possession.

All my Estate real and personal consists in the hopes of the sale of books publish'd or unpublish'd. Now I wish *Brown* and you to be the first paid Creditors — the rest is nubibus — but in case it should shower pay my Taylor[2] the few pounds I owe him."

If others hoped for Keats, he dared not do so for himself. He was setting his house in order and facing the worst.

Yet, if Keats had been in the mood to be cheered by such things, there was at least the much better reception of his book than had fallen to the lot of either of his others to gratify him.

We have seen what Taylor and Hessey and Reynolds and Severn thought of the book. Here is the opinion of Mrs. Dilke, written to her father-in-law at Chichester:

[3] "I am anxious to know what success Keats' new poems have. I do not promise myself a great victory. If the public cry him up as a great poet, I will henceforth be their humble servant; if not, the devil take the public."

[1] Threepenny post.
[2] Tailor. Not infrequently so spelt by Keats.
[3] *Papers of a Critic*, by Charles Wentworth Dilke.

Review writers are hardly "the public"; they are more, and less. Keats was fortunate in his earliest reviewer, and would have been more fortunate still if Charles Lamb, for it was no other, had not seen fit to publish his critique in the *New Times* anonymously. Lamb was by way of liking Keats as a poet, he even considered him as "next to Wordsworth"[1] among modern poets, a great deal for Lamb. Lamb began his review by quoting four stanzas from the *Eve of St. Agnes*, those in which Madeline kneels beneath the stained glass window and afterwards undresses, saying of them:

> "Like the radiance, which comes from those old windows upon the limbs and garments of the damsel, is the almost Chaucer-like painting, with which this poet illumes every subject he touches. We have scarcely anything like it in modern description. It brings us back to ancient days and 'Beauty making-beautiful old rhymes.'"

But, to Lamb, the "finest thing" in the volume was the *Pot of Basil*, which he greatly preferred to *Lamia*. This latter poem he declared to be "of as gorgeous stuff as ever romance was composed of," and said that it did "all that fairy land can do for us," but for him "an ounce of feeling is worth a pound of fancy," and he returned "with a warmer gratitude, to the story of Isabella and the pot of basil." *Hyperion* he did not mention, which was odd, for it was precisely *Hyperion* which won most suffrages on the book's appearance.

Lamb's criticism was published within a fortnight after the publication of the book, which made it especially valuable.

In July, also, the old, established *Monthly Review*, which had not noticed *Endymion*, published a review of the new volume. The *Monthly* critic blew both hot and cold; he praised Keats for his originality, but adjured him "to be-

[1] Crabb Robinson's Diary.

come less strikingly original." He exalted *Hyperion* as the best poem in the book, and damned the *Pot of Basil* as the worst; but he quoted the ode *To Autumn* in full, and ended by announcing that the author's "writings present us with so many fine and striking ideas . . . that we shall always read his poems with much pleasure."

Hunt followed this by two reviews in the *Indicator* for the second and ninth of August. In order to fit his criticism into what we should now call a "column," but which Hunt speaks of as a "miscellany," Hunt told the stories of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Lamia*, the *Pot of Basil*, and *Hyperion*, interpolating into his narratives certain quotations from these poems. He also quoted entire the *Ode to a Nightingale*, as a comment to which he wrote: "The imagination of Mr. Keats betakes itself, like the wind, 'where it listeth,' and is as truly there, as if his feet could follow it." *Hyperion* was "a fragment, — a gigantic one, like a ruin in the desart, or the bones of a mastodon." Hunt's remarks on *Lamia* and the *Pot of Basil* were slight and unimportant, and his criticism of the *Eve of St. Agnes* not so good as that published many years later in *Imagination and Fancy*, but his summing up of the volume was, on the whole, excellent:

> "The author's versification is now perfected, the exuberances of his imagination restrained, and a calm power, the surest and loftiest of all power, takes place of the impatient workings of the younger god within him. The character of his genius is that of energy and voluptuousness, each able at will to take leave of the other, and possessing, in their union, a high feeling of humanity not common to the best authors who can less combine them. Mr. Keats undoubtedly takes his seat with the oldest and best of our living poets."

Hunt had done well, but, whatever Hunt might say, his opinion was discounted in advance by his enemies and presupposed by his friends: his assistance to Keats was, therefore, negligible. Far otherwise was it with the *Edinburgh*

*Review*, which had maintained so stiff a silence in regard to *Endymion*. Jeffrey, the editor, was conservative in his tastes, but a pronounced enemy of the *Quarterly Review*. Why he had so long delayed to speak — a delay which Keats imputed to "cowardice" and which, he had told George the preceding September, "is more than the abuse of the Quarterly" — we can only conjecture; why he spoke at last is equally to seek. Perhaps, as Sir Sidney Colvin suggests, influential Whigs like Sir James Mackintosh had given him a hint to break silence. Whatever the reason, Jeffrey wrote a long article on both *Endymion* and the *Lamia* volume in the August number of the *Review*. He spoke of both books as "flushed all over with the rich lights of fancy," and said of *Endymion*: "We are very much inclined indeed to add, that we do not know any book which we would sooner employ as a test to ascertain whether any one had in him a native relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its intrinsic charm." The review was long, and full of wise praise and sensible exceptions. Most of the paper was taken up with *Endymion*, but a short notice of the later volume contained quotations from *To Autumn*, *Fancy*, and the *Pot of Basil*, which last poem won from Jeffrey the epithet "deep pathos" applied to some of the stanzas. He did not advise the completion of *Hyperion*.

This was all good, but the sale was not brilliant. If Keats had had an ounce of envy or jealousy in his composition, the contrast between his own experience and that of the young peasant poet, John Clare, would have been a red hot iron to him. Clare was a recent discovery of Taylor's, who had brought out his first book, *Poems, Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, the Winter before with enormous success. It had leaped into the public favour at once, and been extravagantly praised by Keats's old enemy, the *Quarterly*. But not one syllable of all this do we hear from Keats, not a word of annoyance does he let fall, and I

think he felt none. His measurement of success did not entail comparisons with contemporary poets. Writing to Brown toward the end of the Summer, Keats remarks: "My book has had good success with the literary people, and I believe has a moderate sale." Shortly afterwards, he wrote again: "The sale of my book is very slow, though it has been highly rated." Taylor, a little discouraged, speaking of the poems to a correspondent, admits:[1] "They do not sell *very* well, but I rather think the Edinburgh Review will give them a lift." He is more explicit in a letter of the fourteenth of August to John Clare:[2]

> "We have some trouble to get through 500 copies of his work, though it is highly spoken of in the periodical works."

Taylor goes on to say that the old *Quarterly* attack, imputing to Keats a certain political bias, is what most stands in his way, at the thought of which the fiery publisher bursts out: "Damn them (I say) who could act in so cruel a way to a young man of undoubted Genius."

Taylor was a strong and brave partisan, who spoke his mind without regard to his pocket. How ably and sternly he could stand up for a principle and a friend, a letter to Hessey,[3] now in his turn gone on a vacation, shows:

"London 31 August 1820.

My dear Hessey,

I have had this Day a call from Mr. Blackwood. We shook Hands & went into the Back Shop. After asking him what was new at Edinburgh, and talking about Clare, the *Magazine*, Baldwins, Peter Corcoran, & a few other Subjects, I observed that we had published another Volume of Keats's poems on which his Editors would have another opportunity of being witty at his Expense. He said they were disposed to speak favourably of Mr K this Time —

[1] Quoted by Sir Sidney Colvin.

[2] *New Sidelights on Keats, Lamb, and Others. From Letters to J. Clare*, by Edmund Blunden. *The London Mercury*. June, 1921.

[3] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection. The original lacks quotation marks, which, for greater clarity, I have added.

and he expected that the article would have appeared in this Month's Mag. 'But can they be so inconsistent?' 'There is no Inconsistency in praising him if they think he deserves it.' 'After what has been said of his Talents I should think it very inconsistent.' 'Certainly they found fault with his former Poems, but that was because they thought they deserved it.' 'But why did they attack him personally?' 'They did not do so.' 'No? Did they not speak of him in ridicule as Johnny Keats, describe his Appearance while addressing a Sonnet to Ailsa Crag, and compare him as a Friesland Hen to Shelley as a Bird of Paradise; besides what can you say to that coldblooded Passage where they say they will take care he shall never get 50£ again for a vol. of his Poems — what had he done to cause such attacks as these?' 'Oh it was all a Joke, the writer meant nothing more than to be witty. He certainly thought there was much Affectation in his Poetry, and he expressed his opinion only. It was done in the fair spirit of Criticism.' 'It was done in the Spirit of the Devil, Mr. Blackwood. So if a young man is guilty of Affectation while he is walking the Streets, it is fair in another Person because he dislikes it to come and knock him down.' 'No,' says B. 'but a Poet challenges public opinion by printing his Book; but I suppose you would have them not criticized at all?' 'I certainly think they are punished enough by neglect & by the failure of their Hopes and to me it seems very cruel to abuse a man merely because he cannot give us as much pleasure as he wishes. But you go even beyond that, you strike a man when he is down. He gets a violent blow from the Quarterly & then you begin.' 'I beg your pardon' says B. 'we were the first.' 'I think not but if you were the first you continued it after, for that truly diabolical thrust about the 50£ appeared after the critique in the Quarterly.' 'You mistake that altogether' sd B. 'the writer does not like the cockney school, & so he went on joking Mr. K. about it.' 'Mr. Blackwood, Why should not the Manners of Gentlemen continue to regulate their conduct when they are writing of each other as much as when they are in conversation. No man would insult Mr. Keats in this Manner in his company, and what is the

Difference between writing & speaking of a poem except that the written Attack is the more base from being made anonymously & therefore at no personal Risk. I feel Regard for Mr. Keats as a man of real Genius, a gentleman, nay more as one of the gentlest of human Beings. He does not resent these things himself, he merely says of his opponents "They don't know me." Now this mildness makes those who are his Friends feel the more warmly, when they see him ill used. But this Feeling is not confined to them. I am happy to say that the public Interest is awakened to a Scorn of the Injustice which has been done him, and that the Attempts to ruin him will have in the End a contrary Effect.' Here I turned the Conversation to another Subject by asking B if he had read the Abbot, and in about 10 Minutes he made his Exit with a formal Bow & a good Morning.

The above is the Substance and as nearly as possible they are the words I made use of. His Replies were a little more copious than I have stated, but to the same Effect. I have written this Conversation down on the Day it took place because I suspect some allusion may hereafter be made to it in the Mag. and I fully expect that whatever Books we publish will be received with Reference to the feeling it is calculated to excite in the Bosoms of these mosstroopers . . .

I am perfectly sure he will never call on me again."

As a matter of fact, *Blackwood's* never reviewed the *Lamia* volume at all. The nearest approach to it was a quasi-apology, quasi-snarl, interpolated in a review of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* printed in the number for September. But, in the same number, a scurrilous rhymed jibe at the "Cockney School" contains this refined allusion to the book:

"We, from the hands of a cockney apothecary,
Brought off this pestle, with which he was capering,
Swearing and swaggering, rhyming and vapouring;
Seized with a fit of poetical fury,
. . . . . .
Loud he exclaimed, 'Behold here's my truncheon;

> I'm the Marshal of poets — I'll flatten your nuncheon.
> Pitch physic to hell, you rascals, for damn ye, a —
> I'll physic you all with a clyster of Lamia.'"

To this morsel of admirable wit was appended a note to make it quite clear that "Johnny Keats" was the aforesaid apothecary.

It is very possible that Keats never saw this number of *Blackwood's*, reviews in those days were far from punctual to their dates. And he may never have seen two other September reviews, the *British Critic* and the *Eclectic Review*. The first of these could "not approve of the morality of the principal poems," but admitted that there was "nothing in the details" of them which "would appear calculated to wound delicacy," and it did pronounce the author "a person of no ordinary genius." The *Eclectic Review* fell foul the *Advertisement*, which it positively gloated over, choosing to consider it as a sign of recantation on the part of the poet. The *Eclectic Review* was the organ of "protestant dissenters, of various denominations";[1] it need not surprise us, therefore, to find it hoping fervently that, but doubting very sincerely if, the author were a Christian.

One more criticism appeared in September, in Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*, edited by Thomas Campbell. The *New Monthly* was all praise, from the first paragraph, which declared that

> "These poems are very far superior to any which their author has previously committed to the press. They have nothing showy, or extravagant, or eccentric about them; but are pieces of calm beauty, or of lone and self-supported grandeur. There is a fine freedom of touch about them, like that which is manifest in the old marbles,"

to the last, in which it is prophesied of "Mr. Keats" that

> "if he proceeds in the high and pure style which he has

[1] Leigh's *New Picture of London*. 1819.

now chosen, he will attain an exalted and a lasting station among English poets."

For the individual poems, none of the short pieces were noticed, but *Lamia* was spoken of as "a mingling of Greek majesty with fairy luxuriance," the stanzas where Isabella digs up Lorenzo's head in the *Pot of Basil* were called "wildly intense," the *Eve of St. Agnes* was "a piece of consecrated fancy," while the description of the Titan's cave in *Hyperion* was crowned with the climax of the reviewer's epithets, being considered "in the sublimest style of Æschylus." Florid and indiscriminate as all this is, the review was in the right vein, and following, as it did, on the heels of Lamb, Hunt, and Jeffrey must have seemed to round out an almost unanimous chorus of praise.

Added to these public tributes, Keats received an unexpected accolade in the form of a letter[1] from a Scottish admirer, John Aitken, afterwards editor of *Constable's Miscellany*, but at this time teller in an East Lothian Bank. Aitken wrote in a strain of fulsome enthusiasm, begging Keats to come and make him a long stay, promising him quiet in which to work, "soothing affection," and a library "select and extensive." Yet for all his nonsensical expressions, it is quite obvious that Aitken's offer was sincere, and prompted by a real admiration. There is no evidence that Keats ever answered this letter, nor is it ever alluded to in his correspondence, but the letter itself was found among Taylor's papers.

Keats's last appearance in print during his lifetime was a singular one, also it was anonymous. Hunt, who bore no grudge at his friend's summary departure from his house, printed four stanzas and a half of the *Cap and Bells* in a paper on *Coaches* in the *Indicator* for August twenty-third. These are the stanzas in which Eban, the page, takes a hackney-coach to drive to the soothsayer Hum's house. Hunt announced that the poem from which the stanzas

[1] Unpublished letter. Author's Collection.

were taken was by "a very good poetess, of the name of Lucy V——L——." The passage was very pertinent to Hunt's article, but I fear the joke came too late to afford any amusement to Keats, who was, however, willing to indulge Hunt in it.

As the days went on, it became imperative to take some definite steps in regard to the proposed Italian journey. Keats wrote and asked Brown if he would go with him, directing his letter to where he supposed Brown would be at a given time, but no answer came back. Possibly Brown had gone to Ireland. The letter had certainly stated the facts imperatively enough when it said:

> "I ought to be off at the end of the week, as the cold winds begin to blow towards evening; — but I will wait till I have your answer to this. I am to be introduced, before I set out, to a Dr. Clark, a physician settled at Rome, who promises to befriend me in every way there."

Relief from jealousy, and the nursing of Mrs. and Miss Brawne, had been of infinite benefit to Keats. On Wednesday, August twenty-third, he wrote to his sister:

> "If I return well from Italy I will turn over a new leaf for you. I have been improving lately, and have very good hopes of 'turning a Neuk' and cheating the consumption."

Modern medical practice lays great stress on the importance of ease of mind and placidity of surroundings for tuberculous patients, but no such idea had entered the heads of practitioners in Keats's day. A patient must get out of England and go to a warmer climate, no matter what sort of a climate it was otherwise, and no matter what conditions faced him there. No regard for what he left was allowed to change this decision in the least. Loneliness, discomfort, exposure even, were as nothing to the benefit of being somewhere a degree or more South of England. In sending Keats out of England, the doctors simply pursued the regimen they had been following all along: that of so

reducing his powerfully resisting body that tuberculosis might have every chance to kill him as quickly as possible.

Many and long must have been the talks between the lovers, and between the lovers and the mother. Buxton Forman says, presumably on Severn's authority, that there was some question of an immediate marriage, but indeed we know that from Fanny Brawne herself, as I shall show later. Keats wished fervently that not only Fanny, but her mother as well, could go with him to Italy. Yet it was his chivalry even more than Mrs. Brawne's prudence which denied him the peace of marriage under the circumstances. Still, hoping against hope, cheating themselves in the light of a false dawn, Keats and Fanny made their impossible plans. Mrs. Brawne was to live with them when they married, which was to be just beyond the fatal journey to Italy. So Keats, refusing to sacrifice Fanny, pictured out a future which, in reality, he never believed in. All his petty selfishness in little things fades away before the spectacle of his immolation on the spear of his all-embracing chivalry. He denied himself life to spare her the intimate experience of death.

Years after, Fanny Brawne wrote to Medwin of Keats's last days in England, and her letter proves how well she had learnt to understand her lover:

> "That his sensibility was most acute, is true, and his passions were very strong, but not violent, if by that term, violence of temper is implied. His was no doubt susceptible, but his anger seemed rather to turn on himself than on others, and in moments of greatest irritation, it was only by a sort of savage despondency that he sometimes grieved and wounded his friends . . . For more than a twelvemonth before quitting England, I saw him every day, often witnessed his sufferings, both mental and bodily, and I do not hesitate to say that he never could have addressed an unkind expression, much less a violent one, to any human being. During the last few months before leaving his native country, his mind underwent a severe conflict; for

> whatever in moments of grief or disappointment he might say or think, his most ardent desire was to live to redeem his name from the obloquy cast upon it; nor was it till he knew his death was inevitable, that he eagerly wished to die . . . I believe that the fever which consumed him, might have brought on a temporary species of delirium, that made his friend Mr. Severn's task a painful one."

No one had experienced the "temporary species of delirium" so often or so bitterly as Fanny Brawne, and if, after what she had gone through, she could write in this way to Medwin, it is cruelty to question either her love or her comprehension.

Meanwhile no remittance came from George, and Keats was on the eve of a journey and utterly destitute of funds. Brown was away, there was only Taylor to turn to, and Taylor rose to the occasion — not perhaps entirely without an eye to future gain for the firm, if not in actual cash, at least in reputation. Taylor had an unshakable belief in Keats's genius, and was convinced that every assistance rendered him would in the end redound to his benefactors' credit. Basing his actions on this belief, Taylor promptly agreed to cancel all Keats's outstanding debts to his firm. He had, apparently, some time before, promised to take over the copyright of *Endymion* as an offset to the one hundred pounds advanced on that book; now he proposed to take over the copyright of the *Lamia* volume in the same manner as part payment of what was due at the moment, and to this he added the sum of thirty pounds, making the payment for the *Lamia* also one hundred pounds. More than this, he gave Keats a letter-of-credit for one hundred and fifty pounds.[1] Taylor was one of the people who thought the whole seven hundred pounds that George had taken back to America belonged to John, and seems to have been fully persuaded that remittances from George would come before Keats's drafts from Italy would have to be honoured.

[1] Compiled from an unpublished letter from Taylor to his cousin, Michael Drury. February, 19, 1821. Author's Collection.

It is quite clear that he entirely misunderstood the situation, and that Keats, in his turn, failed to realize Taylor's point of view. We shall see the result of these mutual misunderstandings in the next chapter. Before Keats sailed, Taylor wrote him a letter.[1] It is endorsed "Not sent," and indeed is not quite accurate. He speaks of giving Keats fifty pounds, whereas later letters from him state the sum to have been thirty pounds. I quote this drafted letter in full, since, notwithstanding its one small inaccuracy, and its occasional blanks where figures are concerned, it is very illuminating as to Taylor's attitude and also speaks highly for his generosity and that of his partner Hessey. For, although Taylor promised more than he wished to perform in the matter of the letter-of-credit, nevertheless, so far as Keats himself was concerned, he was really generous.

"Fleet Street 11 Sept 1820.

My Dear Keats,

Before you go out of the country I am desirous of explaining to you on what Terms we conceive ourselves to be acting as your Publishers. — In few words we may state it thus. — Whatever we print we run the Risk of, and if it does not answer, the loss is ours: whatever succeeds we deem the Profit wholly yours; but if one work fails and leaves us a loss which the Profit on another would make up, we should consider ourselves entitled to be reimbursed that loss out of those Profits. — If all, or the Majority, do not repay the Expenses, then the loss is wholly ours. — On these Terms we are willing to go on publishing if you choose to write; we shall charge no Commission for our Trouble, meaning to derive no advantage; and we will render an account of the Sales whenever you please, to shew you in what state your Finances are —

I have put it in this light to make it plainer; but if we take the matter in another point of view it will amount to the same thing: consider then the Endymion ours, for the Copyright of which we gave 100£; and say that what we have already advanced to you in Cash since that Time,

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

viz £ is the Price of the Copyright of Lamia: now if we get anything beyond these sums by either of the Books, so as to have in our Hands on the whole more than we have given you, we will transmit that Surplus to you; and so on with every future work.

I make this explicit statement of what you would otherwise have discovered in due Time, to convince you that we have no selfish Ends to answer in encouraging you to write & publish; and also that you may correctly estimate the Means we have in our Hands of supplying you with money while you are abroad. — At present we are out of pocket 135£ on Endymion, but that may be reduced by future Sales if your other works succeed — Lamia has not yet repaid the Expenses, there is therefore the advance on that to be added, making together with the Books mentioned in the enclosed Bill £. — You shall have 50£ more to take you to Italy, and from thence you must draw for what you want, but I think you will not wish us to pay those Bills without placing some Money in our Hands for that purpose. If I were rich enough to do without the whole Sum that you might want I would gladly give it to you, but if I wanted it I know nobody who would let me have it.—

You will do well to publish again as soon as you have the power to produce anything, and the Success you may rely upon it will in every Instance increase. I hope yet to see you as rich and as renowned as you deserve to be. — Meantime wishing you a pleasant Voyage, perfect Health, and all Happiness, I remain,

My dear Keats
Your faithful Friend
JOHN TAYLOR"

That Keats left England with a credit of no more than one hundred and fifty pounds is proved by the following hitherto unpublished letter from the firm, Taylor and Hessey, to a certain "Brown Esq. Poultry,"[1] whoever he may have been — a relative of Charles Brown's perhaps, but certainly not he himself, for Charles Brown did not

[1] Copy in Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

reach London until September eighteenth, also he had no corresponding business house at Naples.

"Fleet Street
19 Sept 1820

SIR

In compliance with the wish you expressed on Saturday last we write to inform you that we will honor the Bills of Mr. John Keats of Naples to the amount of one Hundred and Fifty pounds; and you will much oblige us by allowing and directing that those Bills should be negociated through the Medium of your House at Naples. Mr. Keats sailed on Sunday last in the Maria Crowther.

We are Yrs try
T & H"

Taylor had not only bestirred himself in the matter of money, he had found a vessel due to sail for Naples in the middle of September. This was the "Maria Crowther," a small brig.[1] She had been built in 1810, for the Bristol, Liverpool and Holyhead trade, and is listed as one of the regular trading ships in that trade in Stewart's *Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack* for 1816. She had lately changed captains, and probably owners, as well as route.

All was arranged, but still Brown had not been heard from, and Keats faced the possibility of making the voyage, and living in Italy, alone. There seemed no one in a position to go with him, when suddenly Haslam thought of Severn. Severn was as poor as a church mouse (although, as a matter of fact, less destitute than Keats), and he was not getting on any too well as regarded his financial prospects in England. Haslam went round to see him one evening to suggest that he pick up stakes and go to Rome with Keats. Rome, in those days, was the artist's Mecca, every artist wanted to get there, and many who won scholarships did. Haslam's proposal was not quite so crazy as it sounds,

[1] Not a brigantine, as is usually stated. Severn's picture of the vessel in the *Keats Memorial Volume* makes her rig quite clear.

for embedded in it was the very practical idea that, while in Rome, subject to her artistic influences and in touch with her resident painters, Severn, who had won the Royal Academy's gold medal the previous Winter with his *Cave of Despair*, should paint a picture and submit it for that society's travelling scholarship, which, if he won it, would enable him to stay in Rome for future study. His getting the scholarship was the merest chance, of course, but without such a chance it would have been utter folly for Severn to have considered the journey, no matter how strongly importuned by his old affection and admiration for Keats to do so. Haslam's call took place only a few days before the time when the "Maria Crowther" was expected to sail. In one set of reminiscences, Severn says he had three or four days to get ready; in another, he declares that he started the very next morning. Since he had time to call on Sir Thomas Lawrence and obtain an introduction to Canova, and to collect from a lady twenty-five pounds owing him for a miniature, it seems likely that some days at least intervened between his acceptance of Haslam's proposal and the putting of it into effect. At any rate, it was all very quickly done, and Keats had secured a companion, if not by any means the one he would have chosen. It was agreed that the travellers should meet at the dock. Severn had a hard time to get away. His father was violently opposed to his going; but go he did, with the twenty-five pounds miniature money as his sole travelling expense fund.

It had been decided that Keats should move in town to Taylor's house, 91 New Bond Street, a few days before the expected time of departure, in order to be on hand when the "Maria Crowther" should actually sail. When he went, no letter nor account yet discovered states. In a copy of Hunt's *Literary Pocket Book* for 1819, which Keats had given her, under the date of September eighth, Miss Brawne wrote: "Mr. Keats left Hampstead." On the

eighth of September, 1819, Keats was at Winchester. But September eighth, 1820, was a Friday, and Keats did not sail until a week from the following Sunday. It seems most unlikely, therefore, that he should have gone to Taylor's so long in advance. No amount of juggling with possibilities of confusion between the calendars of the two years yields anything like a clue, and we must resign ourselves to ignorance of the day on which Keats left Wentworth Place.[1] But it was undoubtedly there that he and Fanny Brawne bade each other good-bye. Each of them knew it was forever. She tried to hope; he knew too well that there was no hope. His last months were spent in trying to wean himself from the world, for to hope against what his reason knew would come was too great a torture. From the moment that the sight of Fanny Brawne disappeared from his eyes, from that moment, Keats entered on his final agony, an agony without respite till the end. His "posthumous life," as he called it later, began then, and in watching the anguish of the next five months, in trying to comprehend his attitude during them, we must never forget that in his own mind he was a dead man from that very instant. His behaviour, baffling as much of it seems, can only be understood by constantly remembering this.

For a day or two, Keats remained at Taylor's, and just before he left, Woodhouse wrote him a letter,[2] which seems to have been given him to read after he and Woodhouse had taken leave of each other. This letter was calculated to ease Keats's mind of the problem of what was to be done when his one hundred and fifty pounds were spent. It was a kindly thought on Woodhouse's part, and the straightforwardness of his expression could not have failed to inspire perfect confidence in his absolute sincerity:

[1] Sir Sidney Colvin states that he went to Taylor's on Wednesday, September thirteenth, but does not give his authority. Possibly I have missed some evidence which Sir Sidney has seen, I have certainly found none.

[2] Author's Collection.

"My Dear Keats,

Upon subjects like those in this letter, it is to me always more pleasant to write than to speak. — It gave me pleasure to learn from Taylor that you are leaving us tolerably easy as to money matters. — The more so, as, from particular circumstances, my own finances, have had, and for the next six months or so will have, considerable drains upon them; which would make it not very convenient to me just *now* to render you assistance in that way. — But when I am a little recruited, which will I hope be about the time I have above mentioned, if you should have any wants of that nature, it would give me the greatest satisfaction to answer your draft; & you would of course, to prevent any disappointments, give me as much previous notice as you could, — I am sure you would not needlessly call upon me: — and, with that conviction, I should be despicable in my own eyes, if, with the means, I wanted the will to assist you. — What is the value of Pelf after the supply of one's own wants? — Of none to me. And there is no one who would be more welcome than yourself to share my little superfluities. —

God bless you! — Take care of yourself, — if it be only for your friends' sake. Above all, keep your mind at ease. There are many who take more than a brotherly Interest in your welfare. There is certainly

' ——— one, whose hand will never scant
From all his poor store of fruits all *thou* canst want.'

And he is

Yours very sincerely
& affectionately,
Rich^d Woodhouse.
Sat^y night. 16 Sep. 1820
Kings Bench Walk Temple"

On Saturday, also, Keats's passport[1] arrived. This most important document has only recently come to light. It is the usual official printed form, filled in with the requisite names. Beginning with the ambassador's name and his credentials from "His Majesty the King of the King-

[1] In the possession of Mr. Oliver R. Barrett of Chicago.

dom of the Two Sicilies" to "His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland," the document continues:

> "Leaving this Capital for *Naples on the English Vessel Maria Crowther commanded by Captain Thomas Walsh is Mr. John Keats* British subject."

Here follows the charge to "all the Ministers of His Majesty and all his Political and Military Officials" to give any necessary aid to the traveller. The passport is dated "London, *16 September 1820*, and signed by the ambassador, "*C. G. de Ludolf.*"

In the bleak and rather chilly light of dawn on Sunday, September seventeenth, Keats and Taylor drove to the London Docks and went on board the "Maria Crowther." Here they found, or were shortly joined by, Severn and his brother Tom, Woodhouse, Haslam, and, according to Severn, other friends as well, but who they were can only be conjectured. Hunt says that he was there, but as he also states that Fanny Brawne and her mother were present, he may be romancing throughout, for that the Brawnes were not at the Docks, we have emphatic proof in an unpublished letter from Reynolds, an extract from which will be given in the next chapter. Reynolds himself was on his vacation in Devonshire, and Brown — where was Brown? Keats must have wondered about this very often and very miserably that morning while he forced himself to appear cheerful and determined. The passengers were to be, besides Keats and Severn, two ladies, but only one of them put in an appearance at the London Docks; the other, they were told, would join the vessel at Gravesend.

The tide turned at a quarter before eleven, and by that time all the well-wishers had gone ashore except Haslam and Woodhouse, who went to Gravesend with the voyagers. Taylor may have gone too, but of his doing so we have no record.

At Gravesend, before bidding him good-bye, Woodhouse cut off a lock of Keats's hair. This lock is still extant,[1] with an inscription in Woodhouse's handwriting:

> "A Lock of the hair of John Keats which I cut off at Gravesend on Sunday the[2] Sept^br 1820 on board the Maria Crowther just prior to leaving him.
>
> He was to sail for Naples for the benefit of his health on the following day —
>
> R^D WOODHOUSE."

The envelope is dated "18 Sept. 1820."

On the way to Gravesend, Severn announced that his passport had not come, whereupon Haslam, serviceable and reliable as always, undertook to see that it should be there before the vessel sailed the next day. Late in the afternoon both Woodhouse and Haslam had said their farewells and departed, and the travellers, although still moored in an English river, were to all intents and purposes really off. By tea-time, they were alone with Mrs. Pidgeon, the lady passenger, and Keats's old life was become a thing of memories and dreams.

[1] Morgan Collection. [2] Date left blank in original.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ITALIAN JOURNEY. THE END

During the first days of the voyage, Severn kept a journal which he sent to Haslam, and even after the regular journal was discontinued, he wrote voluminous letters to Haslam, to Brown, to Taylor. In later years, Severn compiled more than one set of reminiscences of his voyage and stay in Italy with Keats, but his memory was not always dependable as to details. It is therefore wise to rely upon the contemporary account whenever possible, and use the later ones merely to fill in small facts.

Under the date of "Sunday, 17 Sept. 1820" Severn tells Haslam exactly what happened from the moment that devoted friend left the ship. A curious tone of lightness and banality pervades these first communications of Severn's. We shall do well to note it, it is a touchstone to his character, which was more amiable than firm, more kindly than wise; we must also remember that Severn was fully persuaded that Keats would recover, he seems to have been allowed to go off with the invalid without ever having been fully posted as to the extreme seriousness of his condition. He knew that Keats believed himself dying, but that he discounted. It is very evident that he took things always at their face value; if Keats were cheerful in appearance, Severn believed him so in reality. Admiration for Keats, Severn had to an unbounded degree, but few, if any, of Keats's friends can have understood him less. Severn's account of that Sunday evening is as follows:

> [1] "We were soon reconciled to everything about from the Captain down to his Cat — is it not most delightful that

[1] Severn's journal letter is taken from a transcript of the original letter in the Crewe Collection, published by Sir Sidney Colvin in the *Times Literary Supplement*, April 16, 1914, and from a contemporary copy found among Taylor's papers. Author's Collection.

the less we have the less we want — this little cabin with 6 beds and at first sight every inconvenience in one hour was more endeared to us — and to our every purpose — than the most stately Palace — Keats seem'd happy — seem'd to have got at the thing he wanted he cracked his jokes at tea and was quite the "special fellow" of olden times — the kind Mrs. Pidgeon our Lady passenger did the honors of the tea table with the most unaf[f]ected good nature — and we repaid her most gallantly by falling into a sound sleep — and serenading her with a snoring duett — for I have the vanity to think that Keats and myself would continue our harmony even in sleep. I awoke several times with the oddest notions — the first time in a Shoemaker's shop — the next down in a wine cellar pretty well half seas over — but we came to the last snore of our duett — rubbed our eyes and said — 'we'll go to bed' — we slept most soundly — Mrs. P. has a side scene to retire to."

At midnight, long after Keats and Severn, exhausted by their early start, had gone to bed, a small Dundee smack, inward bound, came to anchor close to the "Maria Crowther." On board of her was Brown. Keats's letter had finally reached him, and he had hurried to the nearest port to where he was, Dundee, and taken passage on the first boat he could find sailing for London, a little coasting smack, in which he came as fast as the rather clumsy craft would allow. At daybreak the next morning, the smack weighed her anchor and proceeded to London on the inflowing tide; and by the time Keats and Severn came on deck, she had been gone for some hours. I do not know whether to consider this an unfortunate circumstance or not. Partings were terrible to Keats, and Brown had no intention of going with him to Italy, a fact which Keats would have heard on the instant, and which could not have sounded otherwise than cruel and unfeeling.

This Monday, September eighteenth, is carefully recorded by Severn:

"I arose and looked at Keats — he felt faint in his voice

but in other respects well — our fair passenger came about 8, quite well. We took breakfast and I can assure you enjoy'd it — our Captain is a good fellow — if he makes us happy his object is gained — Keats took his breakfast well. I had proposed to go shore to Gravesend — he thought this a good opportunity to have some things from the Chymists — which I got him — with half a hundred apples and 2 dozen biscuits etc., etc. — and the Captain was trying to buy a goat for him — but was not successful — we all returned in a real full boat — to dinner. Keats was full of his waggery — looked well — ate well — and was well — at six came down my passport — we were not surprised for we made sure of it since our oak friend Haslam had the getting of it. The other lady passenger arrived soon after — a Miss Cotterell — very lady like — but a sad martyr to her illness — which is to a jot the same as Keats . . . the passport coming had unloosed all my prattle — and in a short time Keats backing me with his golden jokes in support of my tinsel — we made Miss Cotterell to laugh and be herself — my wit would have dropt in a minute but for Keats plying me — but I was done up for all that — leaving him sole master — but I struck up again in my own language or Keats would have borne the Lady off in triumph. I began drawing my picture for my dear sister Maria . . . after this I drew a Moonlight scene from the Sea which took until 12 (middle watch) 'the house had gone to rest' — Keats was in sound sleep."

Keats was by no means in the buoyant spirits he assumed; among the medicines which Severn was commissioned to get at the chemist's was a small bottle of laudanum, which Keats wanted for a very special reason, a reason not guessed by Severn at the time. Keats had determined that when his illness proved to be quite incurable, he would spare himself the horrible sufferings of a lingering death by quietly taking an overdose of laudanum. All the time that he was cracking jokes and making puns to fool Severn and amuse Mrs. Pidgeon, he was planning

and preparing for the worst. Why he waited till Gravesend to get the laudanum was probably because at the Brawnes' and at Taylor's a request for it would have aroused suspicion, while Severn was so blind and uncomprehending that Keats knew he could be trusted to see no farther into anything than its surface. It is only the surface which we get from Severn in his journal. How little intimate he and Keats really were, how unaccustomed Keats was to confiding in him, his complete ignorance of Keats's affairs plainly shows. He knew nothing of Keats's engagement, did not, indeed, even suspect that he was in love with Miss Brawne. All Keats's more intimate circle knew this, but Severn was outside that circle, a fact which Severn's later utterances have quite obscured. Severn had, at this time, no idea of George's supposed defection, and he was far too trite a person to realize the desolation which Keats felt at having heard nothing from Brown. We must not forget these things as we read Severn's entries of these early days, they play like a dismal organ point beneath the events which he relates.

The "Maria Crowther" seems to have sailed in the small hours of Tuesday morning. Here is Severn on that day:

> "19th Sept., Tuesday, off Dover Castle, &c.
>
> I arose at day break to see the glorious eastern gate — Keats slept till 7 — Miss C. was rather ill this morning I prevailed on her to walk the deck with me at half past 6 she recovered much — Keats was still better this morning and Mrs. Pidgeon looked and was the picture of health — but poor me! I began to feel a waltzing on my stomach at breakfast when I wrote the note to you I was going it most soundly — Miss Cotterell followed me — then Keats who did it in the most gentlemanly manner — and then the saucy Mrs. Pidgeon who had been laughing at us — four faces bequeathing to the mighty deep their breakfasts — here I must change to a minor key Miss C. fainted — we soon recovered her — I was very ill nothing but lying

down would do for me. Keats ascended his bed — from which he dictated surgically like Esculapius of old in basso-relievo — through him Miss C. was recovered we had a cup of tea each and no more went to bed and slept until it was time to go to bed — we could not get up again — and slept in our clothes all night — Keats the King — not even looking pale."

The next day, Wednesday the twentieth, brought a plentiful supply of discomforts. Severn's journal, dated "Wednesday off Brighton," gives a vivid picture of them:

"Beautiful morning — we all breakfasted on deck and recovered as we were could enjoy it — about 10 Keats said a storm was hatching — he was right — the rain came on and we retired to our cabin — it abated and once more we came on deck — at 2 storm came on furiously — we retired to our beds. The rolling of the ship was death to us — towards 4 it increased and our situation was alarming — the trunks rolled across the cabin — the water poured in from the skylight and we were tumbled from one side to the other of our beds — my curiosity was raised to see the storm — and my anxiety to see Keats for I could only speak to him when in bed — I got up and fell down on the floor from my weakness and the rolling of the ship. Keats was very calm — the ladies were much frightened and would scarce speak — when I got up to the deck I was astounded — the waves were in mountains and washed the ship — the watery horizon was like a mountainous country — but the ship's motion was beautifully to the sea falling from one wave to the other in a very lovely manner — the sea each time crossing the deck and one side of the ship being level with the water — this when I understood gave me perfect ease — I communicated below and it did the same — but when the dusk came the sea began to rush in from the side of our cabin from an opening in the planks — this made us rather long faced — for it came by pailfulls — again I got out and said to Keats 'here's pretty music for you' — with the greatest calmness he answered me only by 'Water parted from the sea.' . . . I staggered up again and the storm was awful — the Captain and

> Mate soon came down — for our things were squashing about in the dark — they struck a light and I succeeded in getting my desk of[f] the ground — with clothes and books, &c. The Captain finding it could not be stopped — tacked about from our voyage — and the sea ceased to dash against the cabin for we were sailing against wind and tide — but the horrible agitation continued in the ship lengthways — here were the pumps working — the sails squalling the confused voices of the sailors — the things rattling about in every direction and us poor devils pinn'd up in our beds like ghosts by daylight — except Keats he was himself all the time — the ladies suffered the most — but I was out of bed a dozen times to wait on them and tell them there *was* no danger — my sickness made me get into bed very soon each time — but Keats this morning brags of my sailorship — he says could I have kept on my legs in the water cabin I should have been a standing miracle."

This journal to Haslam was begun and concluded on Thursday, the twenty-first of September (wrongly dated the twentieth by Severn), so that his entry of that day goes no farther than the morning:

> "I caught a sight of the moon about 3 o'clock this morning — and ran down to tell the glad tidings — but the surly rolling of the sea was worse than the storm — the ship trembled to it — and the sea was scarcely calmed by daylight — so that we were kept from 2 o'clock yesterday until 6 this morning without anything — well it has done us good, we are like a Quartett of fighting cocks this morning. The morning is serene we are now back again some 20 miles — waiting for a wind — but full of spirits — Keats is without even complaining and Miss Cottrell has a colour in her face — the sea has done his worst upon us. I am better than I have been for years. Farewell my dear fellow."

The storm had driven the "Maria Crowther" so far back on her course that she was now off Dungeness, and,

what made matters worse, the wild weather was succeeded by a dead calm. We have no farther knowledge of Thursday, but a stray leaf from Severn's own journal[1] tells us briefly of Friday and Saturday:

"Sept 22nd Friday — A Flat day — waiting for wind in the Dundee Ness Roads — went on shore with the Captain — and found it a wide expanse of Gravel — 2 houses in about 6 miles — and a solitary yard of Furze — Keats appetite increasing.

Sept 23 Saturday — Still waiting for a wind — flat, very flat — Keats beat me hollow at the trencher."

This slim account can be amplified somewhat from one of Severn's later reminiscences:[2]

> "At Dungeness we scrambled over the gravel; and on the opposite side I was astonished and delighted with the enormous waves, at least ten feet high, rushing in upon the shore. The sight fixed me in wonder and abstraction, until a miserable excize man appeared and demanded what I was doing. My bewildered explanation only confirmed his suspicion that I was looking out for contraband — which let down all the high romance which the waves had inspired."

While the "Maria Crowther" was enduring storm and calm in the English Channel, Keats's friends in England were thinking of him as well started on his voyage. Brown, who was greatly chagrined at arriving in London too late to see him, and whose house was probably let until October, had betaken himself to old Mr. Dilke's at Chichester. Taylor, having written an account of Keats's departure to Reynolds, had gone on a visit to his brother in Leicester. Reynolds's answer,[3] which seems to have reached Taylor before he left, is of considerable moment

[1] *Bulletin of Keats-Shelley Memorial Association.* Rome. Vol. I.
[2] *Life of Joseph Severn,* by William Sharp.
[3] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

to us from the light it throws on various things. It is dated: "Exmouth — 21 Sept 1820." I quote it in part only, the rest of the letter has no concern with Keats:

> "I do not know when I have been more gratified at the receipt of a letter than now, for you give me the best of news, full to the brim, that Keats is positively off for a better Lung-land. — There is no half-measure information of expected departure or promised amendment, — but smack you come down upon me with the *Ultimatum* Sir John. Your Alphabet commences at Z. Your Letter is in finals only. . .
>
> Seriously, my dear Taylor, I am very, *very*, much pleased at what you tell me, — and the more so, since Keats has departed so comfortably, so cheerfully, so sensibly. I cannot now but hold a hope of his refreshed health, which I confess his residence in England greatly discouraged, particularly as he was haunted by one or two heartless and *demented* people whose opinions and conduct could not but silently influence the bearings of his thoughts & hopes. Absence from the poor idle Thing of Woman-Kind, to whom he has so unaccountably attached himself, will not be an ill thing; And who would not be banished from the vain and heartless Eternity of Mr. Leigh Hunt's indecent discoursings . . . Keats, then, by this, is at Sea fairly, — with England and one or two sincere friends behind him, — and with a warm clime before his face! If ever I wished well to man, I wish well to *him!* I should indeed have liked to have seen him off with you, but Woodhouse & yourself are a Host of friends in yourselves, and he is not unmindful of you, I warrant me, at this moment!
>
> You scarcely tell me enough, I fancy, of the Brawnes, or whether Keats said anything of *them* before he left. They have been really attentive to him, which we should not forget. Severn will much like the voyage, & greatly pleasure Keats, if I mistake not: Though he is scarcely the resolute, intelligent or cheerful companion which a long voyage and a sickly frame so anxiously call for. I wish you yourself could have cast Fleet Street & Dull Care behind you, and have taken a trip with our ailing friend: — But we

must not, as Sancho says, look for better bread than's made of corn!"

Reynolds's remarks on Leigh Hunt give us a little peep into one of the many divisions into which Keats's old group was breaking up. Those on Fanny Brawne reveal his prejudice and jealousy, constantly fed, we may believe, by his sisters. What he has to say of Severn, on the other hand, being perfectly dispassionate opinion, may be relied upon as fact. Severn was not the man any one would have selected to go with Keats. He was "Hobson's choice," and we shall find that such was the general verdict among Keats's friends.

Light flawy breezes seem to have succeeded the flat calm, and by the time Portsmouth was reached, on Thursday, September twenty-eighth, what wind there was blew from the wrong quarter and Captain Walsh put into Portsmouth Harbour to wait for a change. The ten days beating about the channel with no material headway had so disgusted Keats that it would have taken very little to induce him to give up the voyage altogether and return to London. But Keats was a sensible man and possessed of an indomitable will; he had determined to try what Italy could do for him and would not weaken.

Bedhampton, where the Snooks lived, was only seven miles from Portsmouth, and it occurred to Keats that if the "Maria Crowther" were detained in harbour over night, it would be very pleasant to go ashore and make them a visit. Miss Cotterell, nice girl though she was, depressed him by her continual fainting fits, while Mrs. Pidgeon did not improve upon acquaintance, quite the contrary, and both young men had begun to dislike her heartily. The Captain, on being consulted, declared that there was no likelihood of the brig's being able to sail before the next day at the earliest. So Keats and Severn set off for Bedhampton, where they found an astonished, but exceedingly

warm, welcome from the Snooks. On arrival, they were told the rather discouraging news that Brown was staying ten miles off at Chichester with Mrs. Snook's father. I call this news discouraging, for a proximity which cannot bring about a desired meeting is very hard to bear. Two accounts of this visit exist, one from Brown to Taylor, one from Mrs. Snook to Mrs. Dilke. In these days of motors and telephones, Brown could have been apprised of Keats's arrival in Bedhampton at once, and could have run over from Chichester in less than half an hour to see him, and Keats need not have feared to venture the extra distance from the ship. In 1820, no such possibilities existed. Brown did not know of Keats's being at the Snooks' until a week after it had happened; once again, therefore, the two friends were within an ace of meeting and did not. Brown's letter,[1] dated "Chichester. 5th Septr [a slip of the pen, it should be Octr] 1820" reads:

> "Dear Taylor,
>
> If neither Keats nor Severn has written from Portsmouth, and I believe neither of them has, I have some news gratifying to you & to our friends in London. They landed at Portsmouth after having been tossed about in the Channel for ten days. This was on Thursday 28th. Having a day to spare, they went to Bedhampton, a distance of 7 miles, to visit Mr & Mrs Snook, who were here yesterday afternoon & gave me the following particulars. His health was better than they expected from the accounts they had previously heard, and Severn talked cheeringly of him. On the following morning (Friday) his spirits were excellent. He abuses the Captain, tho' he acknowledges him to be civil & accommodating. He likes one of the Ladies, and has an aversion for the other, whom he rediculed with all the bustling wit of a man in saucy health. He was so sick of the voyage, that a word might have sent him back to London. Unknown to Severn he put on a blister (on his chest) soon after he went on board,

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

convinced it would relieve him, and it appears he believes it has relieved him. Still however he is full of his old apprehensions. He knew I was here (within ten miles) but did not dare to come, lest the wind should change; — how strangely unlucky that we should *twice* have been so near a meeting & yet not met! Had he known where I was at an earlier hour on Thursday, I think he would have come. No! I am mistaken, he could not. I tell you every thing — trifles & all — that you may form your opinion of him. Neither the boisterous weather, nor his antipathies, nor his anger, will do him harm; — on the contrary they will be of service, — they are good physic to his mind, & will help to purge away his apprehensions. He wrote to me in Scotland he was confident the indulgence of his friends injured him, & a letter from me to the same effect crossed on the road. He sailed from Portsmouth on Friday afternoon, with a fair wind, which has continued ever since. Both he and Severn said they should not write; I suppose they relied on my doing so. I send this account to none but yourself, & leave you to disseminate it as you please. Compts to Mr. Hessey. I shall direct this to both of you, lest you should be out of Town, & have too much postage to pay for my scrawl.

Your's most truly,
Chas Brown."

Our opinion of Brown's perspicacity receives a sad blow from this letter. His remarks about Keats being injured by the indulgence of his friends prove him to have completely misunderstood Keats's dangerous condition. There are none so blind as those who will not see. To talk of a man who has had a number of hæmorrhages as likely to be injured by indulgence is more than folly, it is cruelty. Brown needed to salve his conscience, he did not wish, nor intend, to go to Italy, but he wanted to think himself perfectly justified in not going. Brown was tired of the post of nurse and banker, which was perhaps not unnatural; but once again, in the matter of friendship, we find Keats trusting and deceived. Severn's claim to the gratitude of

posterity is just that, although not at all the man for the job, he stuck to Keats through thick and thin till the end.

The second account of the Bedhampton visit is quoted in a letter of October sixth from Fanny Brawne to Fanny Keats:

> "I received a letter from Mrs. Dilke with part of a letter from a relation of hers[1] copied out . . . as I shall copy it . . . 'I have had some very unexpected visitors Mr. Keats and Mr. Severn. They had been beating about with a contrary wind ever since they left London, and at last put into Portsmouth. I think Mr. Keats much better than I expected and Mr. Severn said he was sure that notwithstanding the hardships they had undergone, he was much better than when he left London.' I cannot say this news pleased me much, I was in hopes that by this time he was half way to Naples. He left Portsmouth on the 29th. of September, the wind being favorable, the next day it again changed contrary to their wishes, but they did not return so it is supposed the captain put to sea."

The captain had put to sea, but much good it had done him. It was tack, tack, tack, and almost no real headway, all that night and Saturday, on which day one of the port tacks brought them off Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. Here the wind gave out, and while the vessel lay becalmed, Keats wrote a letter to Brown, which must be given in full, to balance the totally misleading accounts of his cheerfulness sent back to London by Severn, Brown, and Mrs. Snook. Keats mistook the day of the month, a usual occurrence with him; it should not confuse us, the letter was written on September thirtieth.

[2] "Saturday, Sept[r]. 28
Maria Crowther
Off Yarmouth. isle of wight

My dear Brown,

The time has not yet come for a pleasant Letter from me. I have delayed writing to you from time to time be-

[1] Mrs. Snook. [2] Corrected from original letter. Author's Collection.

cause I felt how impossible it was to enliven you with one heartening hope of my recovery; this morning in bed the matter struck me in a different manner; I thought I would write 'while I was in some liking' or I might become too ill to write at all and then if the desire to have written should become strong it would be a great affliction to me. I have many more letters to write and I bless my stars that I have begun, for time seems to press, — this may be my best opportunity. We are in a calm and I am easy enough this morning. If my spirits seem too low you may in some degree impute it to our having been at sea a fortnight without making any way. I was very disappointed at not meeting you at bedhampton, and am very provoked at the thought of you being at Chichester to day. I should have delighted in setting off for London for the sensation merely — for what should I do there? I could not leave my lungs or stomach or other worse things behind me. I wish to write on subjects that will not agitate me much — there is one I must mention and have done with it. Even if my body would recover of itself, this would prevent it. The very thing which I want to live most for will be a great occasion of my death. I cannot help it. Who can help it? Were I in health it would make me ill, and how can I bear it in my state? I dare say you will be able to guess on what subject I am harping — you know what was my greatest pain during the first part of my illness at your house. I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weakness and decline are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever. When the pang of this thought has passed through my mind, I may say the bitterness of death is passed. I often wish for you that you might flatter me with the best. I think without my mentioning it for my sake you would be a friend to Miss Brawne when I am dead. You think she has many faults — but, for my sake, think she has not one — — If there is anything you can do for her by word or deed I know you will do it. I am in a state at present in which woman merely as woman can have no more power over me

than stocks and stones, and yet the difference of my sensations with respect to Miss Brawne and my Sister is amazing. The one seems to absorb the other to a degree incredible. I seldom think of my Brother and Sister in america. The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond everything horrible — the sense of darkness coming over me — I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at wentworth place ring in my ears. Is there another Life? Shall I awake and find all this a dream? There must be we cannot be created for this sort of suffering. The receiving this letter is to be one of yours. I will say nothing about our friendship or rather yours to me more than that as you deserve to escape you will never be so unhappy as I am. I should think of — you in my last moments. I shall endeavour to write to Miss Brawne if possible to day. A sudden stop to my life in the middle of one of these letters would be no bad thing, for it keeps one in a sort of fever awhile. Though fatigued with a letter longer than any I have written for a long while it would be better to go on for ever than awake to a sense of contrary winds. We expect to put into Portland roads to night. The cap$^{tn}$ the Crew and the Passengers are all illtemper'd and weary. I shall write to dilke. I feel as if I was closing my last letter to you.

My dear Brown,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS."

There is no mention here of jealousy. Fanny Brawne seems to have put an end to that forever while Keats was at Wentworth Place. But there is a mention of a projected letter to Miss Brawne. It was never written; if it had been, it would have been in her bundle of Keats's letters, and it was not. Keats wrote no letter at all to Fanny Brawne during these last months of his life. Why he did not do so, is one of the most baffling queries his psychology offers to a biographer. I can only explain it by the fact that already he knew her dead to him. Passionately as he

longed to believe in a life after death, he could not do so. His only hope of tranquillity lay in keeping himself artificially calm. To write to her was to open the door to life once more, to ache for her with an intensity which he could not bear. To most people, communication is a comfort; life, still clung to, affords a measure of relief. Not so to Keats. Believing absolutely in his approaching death, he wished to die, to have it all over and done with as soon as possible. He had made the supreme sacrifice of leaving Fanny Brawne behind; the minor sacrifice of writing to her for her comfort he could not make.

Portland Roads proved an impossible objective for that night, and we do not know how much time elapsed before another calm near Lulworth Cove in Dorsetshire enabled the two young men to set foot on land once more. Severn waxes eloquent over this occasion in his later reminiscences. He says:

> [1]"For a moment he became like his former self. He was in a part that he already knew, and showed me the splendid caverns and grottos with a poet's pride, as though they had been his by birthright."

Perhaps they were. I have already dealt with this subject in an earlier part of this book,[2] and, to avoid duplication, will not do so here. Severn's "splendid caverns and grottos" is a little strong, but sentimental overstatement was one of Severn's irritating traits.

On their return to the ship, Keats wrote the *Bright Star* sonnet in a copy of Shakespeare's *Poems* he had brought with him, and gave the book, with the sonnet in it, to Severn. It is a little uncertain whether or not Severn knew the sonnet to be an old one, at the time. In after years, he certainly believed it to have been composed then and there. In writing it down, Keats changed it slightly from the original version, and in every case the change

[1] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp. [2] See Vol. I, p. 6.

is an improvement. "Devout" is altered to "patient," the "morning waters" become "moving waters," and the line:

"Cheek-pillowed on my Love's white ripening breast,'

gives place to the simpler

"Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast."

In the tenth line, the rather unsatisfactory "touch," disappears in favour of the much better "feel." The final couplet, which was originally:

"To hear, to feel her tender-taken breath,
Half passionless, and so swoon on to death."

stands in the new version:

"Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever — or else swoon to death."

By this change, the bitterness of the first ending entirely disappears; in its stead, there is only a forlorn, majestic peace.

I doubt very much whether these corrections were made on board the "Maria Crowther." Such things take time, and Severn would surely have noticed it if Keats had not written the sonnet straight off. Also, from what we know of Keats's health and state of mind, it does not seem possible for him to have worked over the sonnet then. I am inclined, therefore, to attribute these changes to an earlier revision of which we have no knowledge. He copied the sonnet on a blank page facing *A Lover's Complaint*, which may, or may not, have been intentional.

Exactly when the "Maria Crowther" actually left Portland Roads with a fair wind, is not known, but it must have been very soon after the landing at Lulworth Cove. This time everything favoured them. The wind held, and England was left behind at last.

The voyage fairly embarked upon was, for the most part, distressing enough. Mrs. Pidgeon proved to be a most unpleasant and unfeeling woman. When poor Miss Cotterell fainted, she would do nothing to help her, but left her entirely to Severn, working under Keats's direction. Miss Cotterell's state was extremely prejudicial to Keats's spirits, who had a duplicate of himself constantly before his eyes. Then, too, the invalids were forever comparing symptoms, after the manner of their kind. The poor food and the wretched accommodations (five sleeping in one cabin), to say nothing of the disheartening surroundings, brought on a recurrence of blood-spitting and Keats grew visibly worse from day to day. Alike as Keats and Miss Cotterell were in their general conditions, in one particular they were utterly dissimilar. The result of this dissimilarity I will give in Severn's words. The passage is from a letter to Haslam, written after the arrival in Naples:

> [1] "The lady passenger though in the same state as Keats — yet differing in constitution required almost everything the opposite to him — for instance if the cabin windows were not open she would faint and remain entirely insensible 5 or 6 hours together — if the windows were open poor Keats would be taken with a cough (a violent one — caught from this cause) and sometimes spitting of blood."

The outward events of the voyage were on the whole tranquil. There were squalls, of course, and a storm, but no weather so bad as that they had encountered in the channel. After one of these squalls in the Bay of Biscay, Keats began reading the shipwreck scene from Byron's *Don Juan*, but soon threw it petulantly aside, exclaiming that it was abominable that a man like Byron should find his chief pleasure in laughing and gloating over such scenes of misery. Byron's poetry, he declared, was based upon a

[1] The *Times Literary Supplement*, April 16, 1914. Also copy by Woodhouse. Author's Collection.

paltry originality, that of being new by making solemn things gay and gay things solemn. I do not put quotation marks here because these are not Keats's words, they are Severn's recollection of what he said, written down twenty-five years later. Sir Sidney Colvin has pointed out that these may have been Keats's feelings, but that Severn has given us "nothing of his way of expressing them," with which opinion I entirely concur.

In a calm off Cape St. Vincent, Severn tells us, Keats was enchanted with the play of colours over the smooth sea; and the appearance of a whale come up to spout was a strange and absorbing sight. Shortly after this, the passengers had an unpleasant scare. The "Maria Crowther" was once more becalmed, and in this uncomfortable plight found herself close to a Portuguese man-of-war. Captain Walsh was below, shaving, and apparently the mate did not consider it necessary to pay any attention to the signals made by the Portuguese vessel. Suddenly a shot passed over the "Maria Crowther's" stern. The passengers were in a panic, Captain Walsh rushed up on deck, and a parley began. Some one shouted from the deck of the Portuguese ship in English, demanding to know if the brig had sighted any privateers. Captain Walsh replied in the negative, and the "Maria Crowther" was allowed to drift on. Portugal was at this time engaged in a busy little revolution, and the Portuguese ship was out to intercept any vessel going to the relief of the revolutionists. In the afternoon, the "Maria Crowther" ran across an English sloop-of-war and informed her officers of the morning adventure, whereupon the sloop immediately went about and started in pursuit of the Portuguese ship. I make no apology for including this little vignette of sea life; it is so pleasantly indicative of an age the very paraphernalia of which has totally disappeared.

Gibraltar was passed before dawn one morning, a huge, dim shape in the semi-darkness, but at sunrise the coast of

Africa became visible, red and gleaming in the bright, level rays. Keats was entranced with the view, says Severn, and lay gazing at it while Severn sketched. On days when he felt a little better, Keats's mind would revert to poetry, and he talked to Severn about a poem which, if well enough, he meant some day to write on the story of Sabrina.

So the days passed, Keats on the whole not so well as when he left England, and on Saturday, October twenty-first, the "Maria Crowther" sailed into the Bay of Naples and was at once put in quarantine. This was a terrible thing for the invalids. The weather was very bad, constant rain prevented the opening of the cabin windows or staying on deck. Severn's description, sent to Haslam, is graphic:

> "We are just released from the loathsome misery of quarantine — foul weather and foul air for the whole 10 days kept us to the small cabin — surrounded by about 2,000 ships in a wretched hole not sufficient for half the number, yet Keats is still living — may I not have hopes of him? He has passed what I must have thought would kill myself."

The unpleasantness of confinement in close quarters was augmented by the arrival, and immediate detention, of a lieutenant and six men from an English naval vessel at anchor in the harbour, who, having rowed over to make inquiries as to where the "Maria Crowther" hailed from and what her business, were so unwise as to board her, and were not permitted by the quarantine officer to leave. Mr. Cotterell, Miss Cotterell's brother, also joined the prisoners, which, although pleasant in many ways, increased the cramped condition. Charles Cotterell, of the firm of Cotterell and Company, bankers, 10 Largo della Vittoria, Naples, was a thoroughly nice fellow, and at the moment an extremely grateful one. His sister had told him of the value of Keats's medical advice to her during the voyage,

and of Severn's attentions, and he could not do enough for both young men. He made their detention as pleasant as he could by keeping the "Maria Crowther" well supplied with fruit and flowers. Severn says that Keats "was never tired of admiring, (not to speak of eating!) the beautiful clusters of grapes and other fruits, and was scarce less enthusiastic over the autumnal flowers, though I remember his saying once that he would gladly give them all for a wayside dog-rose bush covered with pink blooms." [1]

The presence of Mr. Cotterell and Lieutenant Sullivan lent a false air of gaiety to the melancholy little brig. Says Severn, recollecting years afterwards: "All kinds of chaff went on, and Keats was not behind either Mr. Cotterell or Lieutenant Sullivan in witty puns and remarks." The terrible pathos of this is almost more than one can bear.

Severn seems to have really enjoyed these ten days. On starting from London, he had been troubled with his liver, and had looked so sallow that someone at Gravesend had asked whether he or Keats were the dying man. The voyage had done him good, and he saw everything with rose-coloured spectacles, a tint which increased with time, as the difference between his letter to Haslam and his later recollection shows. Keats, on the other hand, was miserable in mind and body. On the third day of their detention, Tuesday, October twenty-fourth, he nerved himself to write a letter to Mrs. Brawne. It is a brave and fine letter, seeking always to appear cheerful, minimizing his sufferings, saying as little to alarm as he can. But Mrs. Brawne was not Severn, and there was ample for her to read between the lines. The original of the letter [2] is badly discoloured, presumably from having been fumigated by the health officers:

[1] Reminiscences, quoted in *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.
[2] Dilke Collection.

"Oct. 24, Naples Harbour.

My dear Mrs. Brawne,

A few words will tell you what sort of a Passage we had, and what situation we are in, and few they must be on account of the Quarantine, our Letters being liable to be opened for the purpose of fumigation at the Health Office. We have to remain in the vessel ten days and are at present shut in a tier of ships. The sea air has been beneficial to me about to as great an extent as squally weather and bad accommodations and provisions has done harm. So I am about as I was. Give my Love to Fanny and tell her, if I were well there is enough in this Port of Naples to fill a quire of Paper — but it looks like a dream — every man who can row his boat and walk and talk seems a different being from myself. I do not feel in the world. It has been unfortunate for me that one of the Passengers is a young Lady in a Consumption — her imprudence has vexed me very much — the knowledge of her complaints[1] — the flushings in her face, all her bad symptoms have preyed upon me — they would have done so had I been in good health. Severn now is a very good fellow but his nerves are too strong to be hurt by other people's illnesses — I remember poor Rice wore me in the same way in the Isle of Wight — I shall feel a load off me when the Lady vanishes out of my sight. It is impossible to describe exactly in what state of health I am — at this moment I am suffering from indigestion very much, which makes such stuff of this Letter. I would always wish you to think me a little worse than I really am; not being of a sanguine disposition I am likely to succeed. If I do not recover your regret will be softened — if I do your pleasure will be doubled. I dare not fix my Mind upon Fanny, I have not dared to think of her. The only comfort I have had that way has been in thinking for hours together of having the knife she gave me put in a silver-case — the hair in a Locket — and the Pocket Book in a gold net. Show her this. I dare say no more. Yet you must not believe I am so ill as this Letter may look, for if ever there was a person born without the faculty of hoping I am he. Severn is writing to Haslam,

[1] Undoubtedly Keats meant to write "complaint."

and I have just asked him to request Haslam to send you his account of my health. O what an account I could give you of the Bay of Naples if I could once more feel myself a Citizen of this world — I feel a spirit in my Brain would lay it forth pleasantly — O what a misery it is to have an intellect in splints! My Love again to Fanny — tell Toots[1] I wish I could pitch her a basket of grapes — and tell Sam the fellows catch here with a line a little fish much like an anchovy, pull them up fast. Remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Dilke — mention to Brown that I wrote him a letter at Port[s]mouth which I did not send and am in doubt if he ever will see it.

My dear Mrs. Brawne

Yours sincerely and affectionate

JOHN KEATS —

Good bye Fanny! God bless you."

On Tuesday, October thirty-first, the ten days were up, and the passengers were allowed to land. But the city which had looked so beautiful from the bay proved to be muddy, noisy, and squalid. To add to the discomfort, the day was chilly, with fog and rain. Presumably the first thing they did was to go and have their passports viséed. It is all here, on the back of Keats's passport, where the first visé in translation reads:

"Registered with the Council of Public Security, Naples, 31, Oct. 1820.

At the office of the 3rd Department.

J. NADIA."

This formality over, the friends went at once to a hotel, the Villa da Londra, in the Strada di Santa Lucia, to which they were taken by Mr. Cotterell. Keats was wretchedly depressed, and his self-control was nearly gone. Even Severn was affected. In his letter, written the next day, Wednesday, to Haslam, from which I have already twice quoted, there is this paragraph:

[1] Probably Margaret Brawne, Mrs. Brawne's youngest child.

"Now that we are on shore and feel the fresh air, I am horror struck at his sufferings on this voyage, all that could be fatal to him in air and diet — with the want of medicine and conveniences he has weather'd it, if I may call his poor shattered frame and broken heart — weathering it. For myself I have stood it firmly until this morning when in a moment my spirits dropt at the sight of his suffering — a plentiful shower of tears (which he did not see) has relieved me somewhat — what he has passed still unnerves me. But now we are breathing in a large room with Vesuvius in our view — Keats has become calm and thinks favourably of this place for we are meeting with much kind treatment on every side — more particularly from an English gentleman here (brother to Miss Cottrell one of our lady passengers) who has shown unusually humane treatment to Keats — unasked — these with very good accommodation at our Inn (Villa da Londra) have kept him up through dinner — but on the other hand Dr. Milne is at Rome (whither Keats is proposing to go) the weather is now cold, wet and foggy, and we find ourselves on the wrong side for his hope for recovery, (for the present I will talk to him — he is disposed to it. I will talk him to sleep for he has suffered much fatigue)."

This was evidently written in the afternoon, after dinner. In the morning, Keats had once more written to Brown, and again I shall give the whole letter:

"Naples,
1 November

My dear Brown,

Yesterday we were let out of Quarantine, during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter; — if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little; — perhaps it may relieve the load of WRETCHEDNESS which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall

see her no more will kill me. I cannot q——[1] My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die — I cannot bear to leave her. O, God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her — I see her — I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was a prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again — Now! — O that I could be buried near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her — to receive a letter from her — to see her handwriting would break my heart — even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*) — if she is well and happy, put a mark thus +; if ——

Remember me to all. I will endeavour to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers! — then I might hope, — but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her — I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh,

[1] Brown made a note on this passage, he says: "He could not go on with this sentence nor even write the word 'quit' as I suppose." Quoted by Buxton Forman. Complete Edition.

Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all!

Your ever affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

*Thursday.* — I was a day too early for the Courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account, from [Haslam]. I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to Fanny. God bless you!"

There is no comment to make on such a letter as this, and I make none, save to point out that, although Keats believed George to have done him an injury in taking his money to America, yet his love for his brother persisted in spite of this opinion. Keats's nature was essentially affectionate.

Before this letter could reach England, Mrs. Brawne had received the one written to her from quarantine. Fanny Brawne speaks of it in a letter to Fanny Keats, written on November twenty-seventh, a reticent letter, in which she is evidently trying to look with might and main at any possible star-point in the gloom. It was a hard task. She says:

"I was so extremely happy to hear of his arrival at Naples, that I overlooked the hardships of their wretched voyage and even the bad spirits he wrote in. The weather was so much against him, joined to his spirits, which prey on him and continually make him worse that it would have been too much to expect any great improvement in his health. He mentioned that Mr. Severn was writing to Mr. Haslam and that we should have the letter to read, as it would give a better account of him than he could write himself . . ."

When Severn put Keats to bed that Wednesday night, intending to talk him to sleep, Keats's reserve was worn too thin to be longer maintained in its entirety. His temperament had always demanded the relief of expression, and when his brothers were no longer there to talk to, Brown gradually took their place. All the five weeks of the voyage, and during the ten days' quarantine, Keats had kept silence, but that night he was too physically weak and shattered to hold on any longer, and Severn heard something of the grief which was eating his heart out. Not much, apparently, merely the bare fact that he was in love without the faintest hope of ever being well again. That there was a definite engagement, Keats does not seem to have revealed to Severn; indeed, it is doubtful if, on this occasion, he told Severn who it was with whom he was in love. But the confidence — once made — relieved him a little, and at last he slept. Severn, continuing his letter to Haslam on Thursday, tells a good deal of what took place without betraying any secret which Haslam might not know:

"Nov. 2

> Keats went to bed much recovered — I took every means to remove from him a heavy grief that may tend more than any thing to be fatal — he told me much — very much — and I don't know whether it was more painful for me or himself — but it had the effect of much relieving him — he went very calm to bed.
>
> Poor fellow! he is still sleeping at half past nine, if I can but ease his mind I will bring him back to England *well* — but I fear it never can be done in this world — the grand scenery here effects him a little — but he is too infirm to enjoy it — his gloom deadens his sight to everything — and but for intervals of something like ease he must soon end it."

On waking up, however, Keats both felt and looked better, and Severn closed his letter much cheered:

"... this morning he is still very much better. We are in good spirits and I may say hopeful fellows — at least I may say as much for Keats — he made an Italian pun today — the rain is coming down in torrents."

It took very little to set Severn's spirits flying skywards, as Keats quite realized. He was easily deceived, so long as Keats had energy enough to deceive him.

In due time, Keats's letter to Brown was delivered at Wentworth Place, and, shortly after, Haslam got his from Severn. Severn's letter, being in the nature of a bulletin, was passed round among Keats's friends, and the duty of communicating the contents of both letters to the Brawnes was deputed to Brown. How skilfully he managed to make it appear that the news in Severn's letter was merely duplicated in his, the following paragraph from a letter of Miss Brawne's shows. The violence of Keats's misery and longing after his final separation from her was, considerately or inconsiderately, kept from Fanny Brawne from first to last. It is always a question how wise it is to protect people for their own good. Brown meant well, and probably his behaviour was in some measure dictated by Mrs. Brawne, but this conspiracy to keep the young girl in ignorance of facts which she had every right to know does not commend itself to a later century.

Under date of December fifth, she tells Fanny Keats:

"Mr. Brown has received a letter dated November 2nd ... when he wrote they were just arriving on shore their sufferings during the quarantine were beyond anything we can imagine ... you may imagine how lowering to the spirits it must have been when Mr. Severn who I never imagined it was possible for anything to make unhappy, who I never saw for ten minutes serious, says he was so overcome that he was obliged to relieve himself by shedding tears ... They had met with several friends who were extremely anxious to be kind to them, particularly the brother of a young lady passenger with them, who

went out in dreadful health, and who, God knows, I have a thousand times wished at the bottom of the sea, as I know she made it worse."

Here I must pause a moment and make room for part of a letter from Haslam to Severn, dated "Greenwich, 4th Dec., 1820." After telling Severn that his letter from quarantine[1] was so poignant that he had shown it to no one, Haslam goes on to speak of the Naples letter. Haslam knew Severn well, very well, yet even he seems to have realized the defects of Severn's temperament, for he gives him some excellent advice:

[2] ". . . to you, my friend, I hope he will have given what you stand much in need of — a confidence amounting to a faith. Study to gain this, Severn, for trust me, that much, very much with invalids depends upon the countenances of those about them. Omit no opportunities that present themselves to induce Keats to disburthen his mind to you. I know (tho' since he left England it has come to my knowledge) that he has much upon it. Avoid speaking of George to him. George is a scoundrel![3] but talk of his friends in England, of their love, their hopes of him. Keats must get himself well again, Severn, if but for us. I, for one, cannot afford to lose him. If I know what it is to love, I truly love John Keats. I sent your letter (the last) to Brown. Brown read it, with omissions and additions, next door, and returned it to me to-day."

In spite of Keats's unhappiness and his physical state, he was by no means obliged to keep within doors at the Villa da Londra. Not at all, he and Severn did the best they could under the circumstances to see the town. What they did, we know only through Severn's recollections, and he is

[1] Apparently missing. At any rate, not quoted by any one, so far as I can discover.

[2] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

[3] Haslam and Brown were thoroughly prejudiced against George Keats and never entirely changed their opinions, even when Dilke, Rice, and Reynolds, after hearing the facts, had entirely exonerated him.

not very clear as to the order in which the various events occurred, but I make no doubt that they did occur substantially as he relates them. The date he gives for the first outing seems unquestionably too early in their stay at Naples, but no matter for that. Here is Severn's account of the event:

> [1] "On the afternoon of the same day we came ashore we saw a grand review of the Neapolitan troops. The men had a fine, martial appearance I thought, but Keats would not allow that they had any backbone in them, and ere long events proved how right he was."

Keats and Severn were not four days in Naples, as Sir Sidney Colvin thought, the passport (which Sir Sidney had not seen) proves them to have been there at least a week. An interesting hearsay anecdote has recently been published, in *Reminiscences of a Literary Life* by Charles MacFarlane. MacFarlane had been living in Naples for four years, and in this Autumn of 1820 was a young fellow of twenty-one. Naples is not a large city, and the society of English residents among themselves was very restricted indeed. Naturally, therefore, MacFarlane knew Charles Cotterell, and Cotterell seems to have told him the anecdote, for he was not present himself on the afternoon to which it refers. Making all allowances for remembered words and such like things, nevertheless there seems no reason to question the main authenticity of the tale, which I shall tell in MacFarlane's words; he is speaking, of course, of Keats:

> ". . . he was driving with my friend Charles Cottrell from the Bourbon Museum, up the beautiful open road which leads up to Capo di Monte and the Ponte Rossi. On the way, in front of a villa or cottage, he was struck and moved by the sight of some rose-trees in full bearing. Thinking to gratify the invalid, Cottrell, a *ci-devant* officer in the Brit-

[1] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

ish Navy, jumped out of the carriage, spoke to somebody about the house or garden, and was back in a trice with a bouquet of roses.

'How late in the year! What an exquisite climate!' said the Poet; but on putting them to his nose, he threw the flowers down on the opposite seat, and exclaimed: 'Humbugs! They have no scent! What is a rose without its fragrance? I hate and abhor all humbug, whether in a flower or in a man or woman!' And having worked himself strongly up in the anti-humbug humour, he cast the bouquet out on the road. I suppose that the flowers were China roses, which have little odour at any time, and hardly any at the approach of winter.

Returning from that drive, he had intense enjoyment in halting close to the Capuan Gate, and in watching a group of *lazzaroni* or labouring men, as, at a stall with fire and cauldron by the roadside in the open air, they were disposing of an incredible quantity of macaroni, introducing it in long, unbroken strings into their capacious mouths, without the intermediary of anything but their hands. 'I like this,' said he; 'these hearty fellows scorn the humbug of knives and forks. Fingers were invented first. Give them some *carlini* that they may eat more! Glorious sight! How they take it in!'"

Two days after Keats's and Severn's arrival, King Ferdinand, in spite of having not long before sworn fealty to the new Neapolitan constitution, incontinently deserted his post and fled to the Austrians. His departure, however, seems to have made little difference as regards certain customs, if, as Severn says, the next happening took place on the very evening of the king's flight. This is what Severn remembers:

[1] "We went that evening to the San Carlo Theatre, and much admired the fine scene-painting, though the singing was not good, and the acting indifferent. We were particularly struck by the admirable painting or clever representation of two sentinels on the stage, one at either side. To

[1] *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

> our astonishment — an amazement which gave way to indignation — we saw at the end of the act, the painted sentries become suddenly animated and move about. They were, in fact, real men, and such was the debasement of the Neapolitan national character that this outrage was actually permitted to pass without indignant challenge. This gross instance of tyrannical despotism was more than either of us could stand, so we rose and forthwith left — though not till Keats had exclaimed in a frenzy, 'Severn, we'll go on at once to Rome, for as I know that I shall not last long, it would make me die in anguish if I thought I was to be buried amid a people with such miserable political [debasement?].'"

If King Ferdinand took to his English man-of-war, en route to Austria, two days after Keats and Severn arrived in Naples, he must have gone on November third. Severn declares that, on the day after the theatre adventure, he and Keats were on their way to Rome, but there is certainly a discrepancy here, for they were still in Naples on November seventh. Since we have no contemporary account to put us right, we shall have to be content with the realization that Severn got his days a little mixed. While they were at the Villa da Londra, Keats read the whole of *Clarissa Harlowe* in nine volumes. A difficult feat to perform in a week; an almost impossible one, even for so omnivorous a reader as Keats, had the time been four days. In Naples, Keats received another letter from Shelley, again urging him to come to Pisa, but not inviting him to stay in the Shelleys' house. Keats, however, determined to keep to his plan of going to Rome. It would have been awkward for him to do otherwise, since any benefit which Severn might derive from the journey was contingent upon its objective being Rome. Also, Keats hoped much from Dr. Clark's care. He had written twice to Dr. Clark, once from the ship, and once from Naples, asking him to find suitable lodgings. There was nothing to be gained by lingering in

Naples, and Keats was anxious to be settled. On Monday, November sixth, Keats went to the British Legation and again had his passport viséed. The visé reads:

> "Seen at the British Legation in Naples. November 6, 1820. Good to go to England — By authority of the Minister.
>
> A. Douglas,
> Secretary of Legation."

Why Keats wished his passport viséed for England, I am unable to understand. Was it a necessary formality in case he wanted to go home by a different route?

On Tuesday the seventh, another visé was applied for. This time to enable the travellers to enter the Papal States. In this case, a time limit is prescribed. The visé is explicit on this point:

> "Seen at the Papal Consulate General.
> Good to go into the States of His Holiness within 12 days.
> Naples, November 7, 1820.
>
> Consul General
> Dominic Albertazzi."

Since the time was short, the way long, and a *vettura* a creeping, crawling sort of vehicle, we may suppose that the friends started their journey bright and early of a morning, and that this morning was the very next day, Wednesday, November eighth.

On the evening before their departure, Charles Cotterell insisted upon giving them a farewell dinner, a questionable attention as far as Keats was concerned. Cotterell and Company were wine merchants as well as bankers, and made excellent white and red Falernian wine from grapes grown in their own vineyards. From this trifling fact we can see that the dinner must have combined English heartiness with Italian charm, and been just such an occasion as would have delighted Keats two or three years earlier. Like Vesuvius itself, it came too late to afford him

any enjoyment. According to Severn, "Poor Keats made a special effort and was very entertaining; and he did not appear to suffer much." [1] Keats had an exquisite social sense, and we have seen how popular he made himself before illness sapped the spring of his vitality. Yet no such effort as this dinner should have been demanded of him. In permitting Cotterell to plan such an entertainment, Severn signally failed in both tact and sense.

It was a long distance from Naples to Rome, one hundred and thirty-nine miles, or nineteen posts, says Coxe's *Picture of Italy*, 1818. According to this volume, the journey was broken in three places, at Mola di Gaeta, at Terracina, and at Velletri. Roughly speaking, then, a day's journey was thirty-four miles. Severn says that the *vettura* went so slowly that he was able to walk nearly the whole way, in which case it is quite clear that he and Keats journeyed at no such speed as the compiler of this guide-book recommends. Also Severn says that "the roads were bad, and the accommodation at the wayside inns villainously coarse and unpalatable." The road was noted for its poor accommodations, but Severn speaks with such violence that it seems plain that he and Keats stopped at other places than those most frequented by travellers. In view of these things, I am very much inclined to think that it took Keats and Severn five days to accomplish the sixty-nine miles to Terracina, and that they stopped four nights on the road — at Capua, Santa Agata, Mola, and Fondi — making the journey, therefore, at the rate of about sixteen miles a day. Terracina, or rather the Torre dell' Epitafio, was the boundary post between the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Papal States. This tower is an ancient edifice whose name is derived from the inscriptions carved upon it. A guard was stationed here, and all the personnel required to examine passports, luggage, etc., and here Keats's passport was viséed for the last time:

[1] Reminiscences quoted in *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

"12, Nov. 1820.
Seen at the Epitafio. Good to enter the Papal States.
Given at the Directory of Police in Terrac[ina].
B.C."

With all our guessing, one thing is a fact. Keats and Severn reached Terracina on Sunday, November twelfth. They must, then, have taken the journey by very easy stages, or not have left Naples until Friday, the tenth, and the former appears the most likely supposition. It seems probable that, having come the five miles from Fondi and endured the necessary official delay at the Torre dell' Epitafio, Keats and Severn rested for the remainder of Sunday at Terracina. Starting on Monday, and proceeding at the same rate, their farther stopping places were probably Mesa, Torre de' Tre Ponti, Velletri, and Albano, and so straight to Rome, which they must have reached on Friday, November seventeenth. There were two post roads from Terracina to Rome, one over the Pontine Marshes, which was considered dangerous on account of the "mal'aria" until after the first frost — or, as we should say to-day, until the cold weather had killed the mosquitoes. The other road was a little shorter, but very hilly. Severn does not mention the Pontine Marshes, but, as the road which crossed them was much the most used and November was well past the malaria season, I assume it to have been the one taken.

Severn's account of the journey shows how very exhausted Keats was. The weather seems to have cleared up, but the poor food was a severe tax on Keats's disordered stomach, and the confinement in the little carriage, together with the jolting, must have caused him much suffering. Severn, who walked most of the time, reached Rome considerably stronger than when he left England, but he has no such good report to give of Keats. He is writing long afterwards, yet we can see that his words are

less highly coloured by the passage of time than was usual with him:

> [1] "Keats, on the other hand, had become very listless, and seldom seemed even relatively happy, except when an unusually fine prospect opened before us, or the breeze bore to us exquisite hill fragrances or breaths from the distant blue seas, and particularly when I literally filled the little carriage with flowers. He never tired of these, and they gave him a singular and almost fantastic pleasure that was at times almost akin to a strange joy. But there was nothing sufficiently out of the common to impress us till we reached the Campagna, whose vast billowy wastes, Keats said, were like an inland ocean, only more monotonous than that we had lately left."

Crossing the Campagna, the young men came upon a strange sight: a Cardinal, in a large crimson cloak, accompanied by two footmen in livery, shooting song birds by the aid of an owl tied to a stick. To the owl was fastened a small mirror which glittered as the owl moved, and this glittering served to attract the little birds who were flying about in scores. "The whole merit of this sport," says Severn, "seemed to be in not shooting the owl." The footmen kept loading the Cardinal's fowling-pieces, and, continues Severn, greatly impressed, "it was astonishing the great numbers of birds he killed." Nothing could have made plainer how far away England was than this remarkable encounter.

The first view of Rome was an event, even to the sick man. "We were both much excited" Severn reports. They entered Rome by the Lateran Gate, and almost immediately saw the Colosseum, not cleaned up as it is in our day, but covered with vines, that superb and stupendous ruin rising out of a rubbish heap with which Piranesi and a host of other artists have made us familiar. Along the paved streets clattered the little carriage straight to the door of

[1] Reminiscences quoted in *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

the right-hand house at the bottom of the steps leading from the Piazza di Spagna to the Trinità dei Monti, where Dr. Clark had taken lodgings for them on the first floor. Dr. Clark himself lived just across the square, and he had arranged for Keats to be near by in order that he might have him constantly under observation.

Dr. (afterwards Sir James) Clark was a Scotchman, and at the time he undertook the care of Keats a comparatively young man of thirty-two. He had begun life by reading law, but had soon given it up in favour of surgery. In 1809, he became a member of the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and immediately entered the navy as an assistant surgeon. At the end of the war with France, he was put on half-pay, and at once returned to Edinburgh and began to study medicine at the University. He received his degree in 1817, and the following year went to Switzerland in charge of a consumptive patient. While there, he began to collect data on the effects of climate upon phthisis. In 1819, he settled in Rome, and here he stayed, going to Germany in the Summers in pursuit of his climatic studies, until 1826, when he moved to London where Prince Leopold made him his private physician. In 1834, the Prince induced the Duchess of Kent to give him a similar post in her household, and on Queen Victoria's succeeding to the throne he was appointed her physician in ordinary, and before the year was out found himself a baronet. So far Clark's life had been as smooth as oil, but a false diagnosis, on account of which an unmarried lady's character was badly, and most unjustly, besmirched, ruined his practice in spite of the continued patronage of the court. He was noted for his conciliatory manner, and the care he took to disguise the taste of unpleasant drugs. He made no addition to medical knowledge, but served commendably in various official capacities and on several royal commissions. In 1860, he gave up practice and retired to Bagshot Park, which was lent him by the queen. He died in 1870.

Society knew of the case of Lady Flora Hastings, but we know of the case of John Keats and it is painful in the extreme. Everything that ignorance could blunder into, every mistake of practice which could be made, were done and made with the best possible intentions by Dr. Clark. He meant well, but the tale is heart-rending. A perfectly just summing up of him is, I think, that he was a poor doctor, with a kindly heart and a pleasant bedside manner.

Who gave Keats his introduction to Dr. Clark, I have been unable to discover. Taylor, writing in February to George Keats,[1] speaks of him as "a very eminent English physician to whom providentially we were able personally to recommend him." Two extracts of letters from Clark, and one original letter, were among certain papers bought by me long ago. The collection is evidently from Woodhouse's or Taylor's store of documents. The only one of these Clark letters with a beginning, the holograph, is addressed to "My dear Gray." Who this Gray was, I cannot find out, possibly Samuel Edward Gray, author of a *Supplement to the Pharmacopœia* published in 1818. As a well-known pharmacologist, and contributor to the *Medical Repository*, Gray would very likely have known both Dr. Clark and Dr. Darling, and may possibly have served as the bridge between the two. Taylor's intimacy with Dr. Darling I have already mentioned,[2] and any introduction received through Darling would, without doubt, in Taylor's estimation, have justified the inclusive "we." The first of these extracts is from a letter written very soon after Keats's arrival in Rome. It is a copy merely, made from the original letter; there is no signature, but the paper is headed "Extract of a letter from Dr. Clark."

"Rome Nov. 27 1820

Keats arrived here about a week ago & I have got him into comfortable lodgings. I can hardly yet give you a

[1] Unpublished Letter. Author's Collection. [2] See Vol. II, p. 422.

decided opinion of his case but will in my next. The chief part of his disease, as far as I can yet see seems seated in his Stomach. I have some suspicion of disease of the heart and it may be of the lungs, but of this say nothing to his friends as in my next I shall be able to give you something more satisfactory. His mental exertions and application have I think been the sources of his complaint — If I can put his mind at ease I think he'll do well — get Mr. Taylor or some of his friends to write him. I'm afraid the Idea of his expenses operates on his mind and some plan must be adopted to remove this if possible. The truth is having come abroad for the purpose of restoring his health, every thing must be done to favor the change of climate — I mean that he shall buy or hire by the month a horse to ride out whenever the weather permits & so forth — After all his expenses will be simple, and he's too noble an animal to be allowed to sink without some sacrifice being made to save him. I wish I were rich enough his living here should cost him nothing. He has a friend with him who seems very attentive to him but between you & I is not the best suited for his companion, but I suppose poor fellow he had no choice. I fear much there is something operating on his mind — at least so it appears to me — he either feels that he is now living at the expense of some one else or something of that kind. If my opinion be correct we may throw medicine to the dogs. Let everything be done to relieve his mind from any Idea of that kind as far as possible — I feel very much interested in him and believe me will do everything in my power to be of service to him. I am glad to find the Edinburgh Reviews have been just towards him. He seems much pleased with Rome and prefers it greatly to Naples."

Dr. Clark's diagnosis was singularly inadequate as regards Keats's physical state, but he showed considerable cleverness in so quickly apprehending his mental condition. His prescription of a horse to ride was at once followed. Keats got a horse and rode at a snail's pace in the Pincio and even along the banks of the Tiber beyond the Porta del

Popolo. He also walked, or rather strolled, about Rome, but by Dr. Clark's orders eschewed all sight-seeing.

Clark, finding that Severn's only letter of introduction was to the sculptor Canova, promptly gave him another to an English sculptor, John Gibson. Gibson was polite, and Keats, on hearing the tale of the visit from Severn, was most urgent to have his friend begin his picture for the Royal Academy's Travelling Scholarship Competition at once. Severn demurred a little, on the plea that painting would take him too much away from Keats and that there would be time for that later when Keats should be better, whereupon Keats told him frankly that his having been awarded the gold medal for his *Cave of Despair* had made him an object of jealousy in various quarters. To point his moral, Keats informed him of a circumstance which had happened the Winter before. Keats had been somewhere in company with Hilton and three other artists when Severn's picture, and the justness of the award, were mentioned. One of the painters began to run down the picture, declaring that Severn had tried many times for the medal and failed, and that it had been given him this time out of pity. Keats, a thorough partizan always as well as a loyal friend, had rushed into the breach and pronounced the thing an insufferable lie, saying that he knew Severn well and had seen the picture which was quite worthy of its success. The painters were probably not greatly impressed by Keats's opinion of the painting, but the fact that Severn had not before tried for the medal, and that he had received it in the usual way, was attested to by another of those present. Keats was so incensed at such a slander being current that he had left the party forthwith in high dudgeon. By telling all this to Severn, Keats won the argument, and Severn set to work on a preliminary sketch of a picture, the subject of which was to be the death of Alcibiades.

Severn's absence threw Keats upon his own resources,

but not for long. He made the acquaintance of a certain Lieutenant Isaac Marmaduke Elton, a quondam First Lieutenant of the Royal Engineers, now, like Keats, a consumptive, sojourning in Rome for his health. The Pincian Hill was then, as now, one of the chief promenades in Rome, and here Keats and Lieutenant Elton used often to walk. Pauline Bonaparte, Princess Borghese, was not infrequently among the promenaders. Lieutenant Elton was a tall, good-looking man, and his figure and address were soon noticed by the famous beauty, who fell into the habit of greeting him with melting and provocative glances. This so rasped Keats's nerves, to whom any reminder of sex at the moment was extremely bitter, that he and Elton gave up going to the Pincio and thereafter walked elsewhere. Canova had just finished his remarkable nude statue of Pauline Bonaparte, and the three young men went to see it. Severn reports that they considered it "beautiful bad taste," and that Keats gave it the unforgettable name of "The Æolian Harp."

Keats really seemed to be better, and Severn became very hopeful. Keats even began talking again about his poem on the story of Sabrina, and he expressed a desire to have Severn play to him. A piano was hired, and Dr. Clark procured some music, of which Severn particularly remembers Haydn's Symphonies. Keats delighted in them, and, says Severn, "would exclaim enthusiastically, 'This Haydn is like a child, for there is no knowing what he will do next.'"

During the first days in Rome, the friends, who talked no Italian and must have appeared to the astute Romans as eminently proper subjects for fleecing, were abominably served by the *trattoria* which had contracted to send in their meals. Expostulations produced no effect, but one day, when the dinner sent in was even worse than usual, Keats emptied the dishes one by one out of the window in full view of the man who had brought it, ending by point-

ing to the basket as a hint to the porter to take it away. From that moment, Keats and Severn had nothing more to complain of on the score of food.

Walking and riding could not take up the whole of Keats's time, and for the rest he read English and Italian. Once when he was reading Alfieri's poems, he suddenly threw down the volume, the lines:

> "Misera me! sollievo a me non resta
> Altro che'l pianto, ed il pianto è diletto"

were too poignant and too personal; he could read no more.

In this Indian Summer period, he again wrote to Brown, the last letter of his we know of, perhaps the last he ever wrote. The letter, although it shows Keats still extremely depressed and not feeling as much improved in health as Severn believed, is nevertheless not nearly so desperate as the ones from the "Maria Crowther" and from Naples. There is the least grain of hope in it, so small that it can hardly be detected, but there notwithstanding. Its presence was a cruel deception — particularly cruel since it was so difficult for Keats to hope — yet it was very natural. Dr. Clark was kind, attentive, and encouraging. There seemed to be an improvement. Here is the letter:

"Rome, 30 November 1820.

My Dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book, — yet I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been — but it appears to me — however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester — how unfortunate — and to pass on the

river too! There was my star predominant. I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, &c., walking with her, and now — the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live? Dr. Clark is very attentive to me; he says, there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George, for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends and tell Haslam I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess; and also a note to my sister — who walks about my imagination like a ghost — she is so like Tom. I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you!
JOHN KEATS."

Keats probably got his information about George from a letter written from Louisville on June eighteenth,[1] which must have arrived in London after he had sailed and been

[1] Author's Collection.

forwarded to him. It contained no remittance, but many expressions of sympathy for John, he having just received Brown's epistle of March. The "good news" seems to have consisted of the facts that his little girl, who had been very ill while he was in England, had not died, and that he had a good prospect of soon selling his shares in a boat, which, when it happened, would enable him to send two hundred pounds to John immediately.

Which of the three letters to Brown given in this chapter was the one that Brown wished to publish in his proposed biography,[1] there is no means of telling; but from his declaring the letter to be "of the most painful description," I suppose it was either the one written on board the "Maria Crowther" or the one sent from Naples. In either case, considering its purport and revelations, one cannot but realize how improper and unfeeling the suggestion of giving it publicity must have seemed to Fanny Brawne, even though her name were suppressed.

The comparative calm was of brief duration. On Sunday, December tenth, Keats had a severe hæmorrhage, which was followed by others on successive days. To the hæmorrhages was added a very high fever.

Four days after the relapse, on Thursday, December fourteenth, Severn wrote to Brown. The letter is quoted, with some slight changes, in Sharp's *Life of Severn*, and there it is printed as being to Mrs. Brawne, but I have a contemporary copy of it which is in the same collection of letters that contains those from Dr. Clark, and the copy is distinctly to Brown. In the last paragraph, there is a message to Mrs. Brawne: "I will write to Mr. Taylor on the next change in my friend, and to the kind Mrs. Brawne when I have any good news. Will you remember me to this lady — Little did I dream on THIS when I saw her last in London." If Severn had been writing to Mrs. Brawne on the same day that he was writing to Brown, he would

[1] See Vol. II, p. 425.

scarcely have sent this message; and he obviously could not have sent it in a letter to Mrs. Brawne herself. The letter to Brown is as follows:

"Rome Dec. 14, 1820

My Dear Brown

I fear our poor Keats is at his worst. — a most unlooked for relapse has confined him to his bed — with every chance against him: — it has been so sudden upon what I almost thought convalescence — and without any seeming cause that I cannot calculate on the next change. I dread it, for his suffering is so great, so continued, and his fortitude so completely gone, that any further change must make him delirious. This is the fifth day and I see him get worse, but stop — I will tell you the manner of this relapse from the first.

Dec. 17 — 4 — morning. Not a moment can I be from him — I sit by his bed and read all day — and at night I humour him in all his wanderings. he has fallen asleep — the first for 8 nights, and now from mere exhaustion. I hope he will not wake until I have written this, for I am anxious beyond measure to have you know this worse and worse state — yet I dare not let him see I think it dangerous. — I had seen him wake on the morning of this attack, and to all appearances he was going on merrily and had unusual good spirits — when in an instant a Cough seized him and he vomited near two Cup-fuls of blood. — In a moment I got Dr. Clarke, who saw the manner of it, and immediately took away about 8 ounces of blood from the Arm — it was black and thick in the extreme. Keats was much alarmed and dejected — O what an awful day I had with him! — he rush'd out of bed and said 'this day shall be my last' — and but for me most certainly it would. At the risk of losing his confidence I took every destroying means from his reach, nor let him be from my sight one minute. The blood broke forth again in like quantity the next morning — and the doctor thought it expedient to take away the like quantity of blood — This was in the same dismal state, and must have been from the horrible state of despair he was in — but I was so fortunate as to

talk him into a little calmness, and with some English newspapers he became quite patient under the necessary arrangements.

This is the 9th day, and no change for the better — five times the blood has come up in coughing in large quantities generally in the morning . . . but this is the lesser evil when compared with his Stomach — not a single thing will digest — the torture he suffers all and every night — and best part of the day — is dreadful in the extreme — the distended stomach keeps him in perpetual hunger or craving — and this is augmented by the little nourishment he takes to keep down the blood — Then his mind is worse than all — despair in every shape — his imagination and memory present every image in horror so strong that morning and night I tremble for his Intellect. The recollection of England — of his 'good friend Brown' — and his happy few weeks in Mrs. Brawne's care — his sister and brother — O he will mourn over every circumstance to me whilst I cool his burning forehead — until I tremble through every vein in concealing my tears from his staring glassy eyes. — How he can be Keats again from all this I have little hope — but I may see it too gloomy since each coming night I sit up adds its dismal contents to my mind.

Dr. Clarke will not say so much — although there is no bounds to his attention, yet with little success — 'Can he administer to a mind diseased' — yet all that can be done most kindly he does — whilst his Lady, like himself in refined feeling, prepares and cooks all that poor Keats takes — for in this wilderness of a place (for an Invalid) there is no alternative. Yesterday Dr. Clarke went all over Rome after a certain kind of fish, and got it — but just as I received it from Mrs. C. delicately prepared, Keats was taken by the spitting of blood and is now gone back all the 9 days. — this was occasioned by disobeying the Doctor's commands. — Keats is required to be kept as low as possible to check the blood — so that he is weak and gloomy. — Every day he raves that he will die from hunger — and I was obliged to give him more than allowed. You cannot think how dreadful this is for me — the Doctor on the one hand tells me I shall kill him to give him

more than he allows — and Keats raves for more till I am in a complete tremble for him. But I have talked him over now. — We have the best opinion of Dr. C's skill — he seems to understand the case, and comes over 4 & 5 times a day — he left word at 12 this morning to call any time in case of danger.

I heard Keats say how he should like Mrs. Brawne and Mrs. Dilk to visit his sister at Walthamstow — will you say this for me — and to Mr. Taylor that Keats was about to write favorably on the very time of his relapse — For myself I am keeping up beyond my most sanguine expectations — 8 nights I have been up, and in the days never a moment away from my patient but to run over to the Doctor — but I will confess my spirits have been sometimes quite pulled down — for these wretched Romans have no idea of comfort — here I am obliged to wash up — cook — & read to Keats all day . . . I wrote last to my good friend Haslam — it will tell you all the events up to the relapse of Keats — I had put the letters in post on the same morning — it was my custom to walk until Keats awoke — we did breakfast about 9 o'clock . . .

Will you, my dear Brown, write to me — for a letter to Keats now would almost kill him — give Haslam this sad news. — I am quite exhausted — farewell — I wish you were here my dear Brown

Sincerely

Joseph Severn

I have just looked at him — this will be a good night."

The reason for the diary form of Severn's letters was that the English post went out only once a week. This letter seems to have been concluded on Monday, December eighteenth.

The starvation diet to which Keats was reduced was at one time so meagre that his daily allowance consisted of one anchovy and a small piece of toast. If Dr. Clark said little, it was because he thought so much. Severn, we see, had not yet lost all hope, and naturally Dr. Clark did not wish to discourage him. What Dr. Clark's real opinion

was, we see by this passage from one of his letters, apparently to the same correspondent to whom he had first written:

[1] "Rome, Jan. 3

In my last I said a few words about poor Keats. Since that date he has had another attack of bleeding from the lungs which has weakened him greatly, and he is now in a most deplorable state — his stomach is ruined and the state of his mind is the worst possible for one in his condition, and will undoubtedly hurry on an event that I fear is not far distant and even in the best frame of mind would not probably be long protracted. His digestive Organs are sadly deranged, and his lungs are also diseased — either of these would be a great evil, but to have both under the state of mind which he unfortunately is in must soon kill him. I fear he has long been governed by his imagination & feelings and now has little power & less inclination to keep them under. I feel much interested in the poor fellow indeed — it is most distressing to see a mind like his (what it might have been) in the deplorable state in which it is. His friend Mr. Severn is most attentive to him. Were Christianity of no use but to give tranquillity to the sick bed it were the greatest blessing on earth. I am sorry indeed, and much disappointed in having to communicate such sad accounts of poor K. When I saw him I thought something might be done, but now I fear the prospect is a hopeless one —"

January third was a Wednesday, and by the following Monday or Tuesday a very slight improvement had taken place in Keats's condition. It was infinitesimal, but enough to start Severn's volatile temperament hoping again. On Thursday, January eleventh, bethinking him of his promise to let Mrs. Brawne know of any alteration for the better, he sat down and wrote her a letter. This letter, from which I shall give quotations only, is not merely important for the information it gives of Keats's condition, but for the light it throws on Severn's character. An early

[1] Copy in Author's Collection.

paragraph shows us as much of Keats's state of mind as Severn was capable of comprehending, and also reveals the light-hearted simplicity with which Severn had undertaken the journey:

> [1] "I most certainly think I shall bring him back to England — at least my anxiety for his recovery and comfort make me think this — for half the cause of his danger has arisen from the loss of England — from the dread of never seeing it more. O this hung upon him like a torture — never may I behold the like again even in my direst enemy — Little did I think what a task of affliction & danger I had undertaken, for I only thought of the beautiful mind of Keats my attachment to him — and his convalescence."

The facts which gave Severn his renewed hope seem slim enough. This is his relation of them:

> "But I will tell you my dear Madam the singular reason I have for hoping his recovery — In the first violence of this attack his memory presented to him every thing that was dear & delightful — even to the minutiæ — and with it all the persecution & I may say villainy practised upon him — his exquisite sensibility for everyone save his poor self — all his own means & comfort expended upon others — almost in vain — These he would contrast with his present suffering — & say that all was brought on by them — and he was right. Now he has changed to calmness & quietude as singular as productive of good for his mind was certainly killing him. He has now given up all thoughts hopes or even wish for recovery — His mind is in a state of peace from the final leave he has taken of this world and all its future hopes. this has been an immense weight for him to rise from. He remains quiet & submissive under his heavy fate.
>
> Now if anything will recover him it is this absence of himself. I have perceived for the last 3 days symptoms of recovery — Dr. Clarke even thinks so — nature again revives in him — I mean where art was used before —

[1] From a contemporary copy of the letter. Author's Collection.

Yesterday he permitted me to carry him from his bed room to our sitting room — to put him clean things on, and to talk about my Painting to him — This is my good news — Don't think it otherwise my dear Madam, for I have been in such a state of anxiety & discomforture in this barbarous place that the least hope of my friends recovery is a heaven to me.

For three weeks I have never left him I have sat up at night — I have read to him nearly all day & even in the night — I light the fire, make his breakfast & sometimes am obliged to cook — make his bed and even sweep the room. I can have these things done, but never at the time when they ought & must be done — so that you will see my alternative — What enrages me most is making the fire. I blow — blow — for an hour — the smoke comes fuming out — my kettle falls over on the burning sticks — no stove — Keats calling me to be with him — the fire catching my hands & the door bell ringing — all these to one quite unused and not at all capable — with the want of every proper material come not a little galling —"

The letter goes on to tell of two new difficulties which were giving Severn a great deal of trouble. The first was brought about by the landlady of the apartment, who had notified the police that a man with consumption was dying in her house. Long before the English doctors had found out that tuberculosis was a contagious disease, the Italians were convinced of the fact, and by their law everything in the room occupied by a tuberculous patient, even to the very wall-paper, must, after his death, be burnt. Now both Severn and Dr. Clark thought it would cheer Keats up to move him from his bed-room to the sofa in the sitting-room for a few hours. In the sitting-room were his and Severn's few books, the hired piano, Severn's painting materials, in short everything of value which the friends possessed. All these things would be destroyed if it came to the knowledge of the police that Keats had been carried into the room. The landlady's private quarters being on

the same floor made discovery a hard thing to evade, but somehow Severn managed it, even going so far as to sweep Keats's bed-room in order to avoid calling the maid, and going without his dinner that Keats might think him dining when he was really sweeping.

The second difficulty was the looming up of possible financial complications. Keats, it will be remembered, had a credit at Taylor and Hessey's of one hundred and fifty pounds. The unknown "Brown Esq" seems to have arranged that this money should be paid through the medium of the well-known Roman bankers, Torlonia and Company. On their advice, Keats had drawn one hundred and twenty pounds on his first draft, an amount which seriously nettled somebody at home, either "Brown Esq" or Taylor and Hessey themselves. Severn asks Mrs. Brawne to write and explain matters to Taylor. But this was only the beginning of the trouble, as we shall see. Severn's letter ended by saying:

> "present my respectful Compliments to Miss Brawne who I hope & trust is quite well — now that I think of her my mind is carried to your happy Wentworth Place — O, I would my unfortunate friend had never left it — for the hopeless disadvantage of this comfortless Italy — he has many many times talked over the few happy days at your House — the only time when his mind was at ease. I hope still to see him with you again — farewell my dear Madam. One more thing I must say — poor Keats cannot see any letters — at least he will not — they affect him so much and increase his danger — The two last I repented giving — he made me put them into his box unread. more of this when I write again — meanwhile any matter of moment had better come to me — I will be very happy to receive advice & remembrances from you — once more farewell."

The difficulty about the letter-of-credit was a very real and a very unpleasant one. Taylor had never expected to

have to meet the payments on it with his own, or the firm's, money. He was in daily expectation of remittances from George, which George was totally unable to send. He seems to have delayed to honour the large draft from Rome until such representations reached him from there as made it impossible for him to hold off longer. The dire state in which things were, was forced upon his attention by Mrs. Brawne, and very likely also by Haslam, and finally by Dr. Clark himself. Clark's letter[1] to the unknown Gray could not be withstood. It made matters very clear, both as to money affairs and to Keats's hopeless condition. Clark says:

"Rome January 13th 1821.

"I have not lost a Post, My dear Gray, in replying to your letter relative to p[oor Kea]ts as I am anxio[us] to prevent any [fu]rther misunderstanding o[n] the Bill affair; I say misunderstanding beca[use] it appears to me that there has been something of this kind either on Keats part or that of his friend Mr. Severn. The truth I am sorry to inform you is that Keats is at present so ill that he must know nothing of the matter, and therefore his particular motives for deviating from Mr. Taylors instructions, or whether he quite understood these, cannot now be understood, and perhaps it matters not much as things stand relative to the Bill. His friend informs m[e that] it was proposed by the Banker that instead of draw[ing] the stipulated sum in small Bills it should be [all drawn] at once, as incurring less expense, and the money [draw]n from him according as it was required. [This] plan as you know was adopted & about half the su[m] & rather more has already been drawn fr[om the ba]nker & the greater part of this sum spent. T[his bei]ng the case the Banker (Torlonia) to who[m] I explained the whole matter advises, as the plan [in]curring the least expense, that th[e] Bill sho[uld] be paid off when due and that he will [re]tain [th]e money now in his hands as the proper[ty of] Taylor &c. till he receives information author[izing him] to pay it to Mr. Keats. This appears to

[1] Unpublished letter from Dr. Clark. Author's Collection. This letter is badly torn, but it has been possible to make out most of the mutilated words by the parts of them which remain.

me also [the best] plan to arrange the matter; do you then ex[plain matte]rs to Mr. Taylor or Mr. Cowie and write to me, or [the ban]ker here without delay a[s] until he receives inf[ormation] directly or thro' me he will not let Mr. Keats have [any mon]ey. Keats however in his present state[1]

nor must he know anything of the matter, as it would answer no good purpose and might add great[ly] to his present suffering to know that he ha[d done any]thing to displease gentlemen that hav[e t]reated [him] so kindly. Write me therefore as soon as you have explained the matter to Mr. Taylor and in [t]he meantime I will take [on m]e, if Keats is in want of anything, that it shall be supplied. — Poor fellow he is now so ill as to be constantly confined to bed, his stomach is still in a very bad state, the affection of his lungs is increasing and the state of his mind is the most deplorable possible — under such melancholy circumstances amendment I fear is scarcely to be looked for, recovery almost out of the question. His friend Mr. Severn is most [atten]tive to him indeed scarcely [ever leaves] him. [His lo]dgings are pretty comfortable & I do not b[elieve he] would have a better chance of recovery any[where] else unless it were among friends who had the power [of] calming his mind — He has no religion — he has been [ro]bbed of that — & philosophy I fear is seldom su[fficient] to produce tranquillity of mind under su[ch sad circum]stances as he is placed — his certainly is not sufficient. Pray when you write tell me if it was c[onsum]ption his brother died of.

I have now my [dear Gr]ay explained to you the whole of th[e Bill a]ffair and the melancholy situati[on of poor] Keats who in my opinion will ne[ver leav]e Rome."

The rest of the letter is too fragmentary to read. It had the effect of making Taylor send prompt advices to pay to Torlonia. But this was not all. It opened Taylor's eyes to two very patent facts: one was that Keats was certainly dying; the other that, until he died, he would continue to need money. By this time, Taylor had begun to lose hope

[1] The letter is torn here.

in help coming from George. He, himself, could afford nothing more, and, in order to supply Keats, he took the only course open to him, he set on foot a subscription among Keats's friends and well-wishers. Lord Fitzwilliam gave fifty pounds, and Rice, the painters Hilton and Dewint, Bonsor, and Percival gave ten pounds each.[1] With this money a farther credit of one hundred pounds was assured to Keats.

The knowledge that Keats was actually upon his death-bed was a final blow to all Taylor's hopes in regard to him. There would be no more poems, as he realized only too well. No future chances of success as the publisher of new books by Keats was possible, and this inescapable fact caused Taylor to do a cruel and unjust thing. He sent a demand note to George for the whole one hundred and fifty pounds of the first letter-of-credit.[2] He had no legal right whatever to do such a thing as he knew perfectly well, so well that he wrote to his cousin, Michael Drury of Philadelphia,[3] to enforce his action by means of a threat of publicity should George refuse. And this was not all. He suggested — nay, urged — that George should refund the money subscribed by the gentlemen from whom he had begged it. Whether Rice, Hilton, and the other ten-pound subscribers, considered their subscriptions in the light of a loan, we do not know, but it seems quite certain that Lord Fitzwilliam cannot have had any such idea. What Taylor did not tell George or Drury was that he was raising money for Clare at this same time, and that Lord Fitzwilliam had divided his bounty between the two poets, according to what he believed their respective needs, giving Clare one hundred pounds and Keats fifty. Later, after Keats's death, we find Taylor telling Wood-

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

[2] Unpublished letter from Taylor to George Keats. February 17, 1821. Author's Collection.

[3] Unpublished letter from Taylor to Michael Drury. February 19, 1821. Author's Collection.

house that this "Advance, or Loan or Gift" of Lord Fitzwilliam's, and the "gift" of the other five gentlemen "deserves to be mentioned to Abby, who may do as he pleases about it."[1] George did not honour this note at the time it was sent, but eventually he paid the full amount. In spite of the unworthy and indecent haste in which Taylor tried to collect from George, his kindness to John suffered no diminution. In the letter to Drury, he says of the new letter-of-credit: "John has been advised of this further advance being ready, tho' not of the way in which it has been raised, for that would destroy him at once," and he says practically the same thing to George.

Reynolds is rather oddly missing from Taylor's list of subscribers. It seems, however, that he did lay aside fifty pounds for Keats's use, if he should ever need it, but with characteristic inadvertence never sent the draft.

It must have been early in January that a letter arrived for Keats from Brown, written on December twenty-first, in answer to Keats's letter of November thirtieth. I do not believe that Keats ever saw this letter. I hope he did not, for in the very beginning Brown wrote:

> [2] "And so you still wish me to follow you to Rome? and truly I wish to go; nothing detains me but prudence. Little could be gained, if anything, by letting my house at this time of the year, and the consequence would be a heavy additional expense which I cannot possibly afford, unless it were a matter of necessity, and I see none while you are in such good hands as Severn's . . . Thank God, you are getting better!"

The rest of the letter is full of chit-chat and gossip, calculated to amuse a convalescing man, but the bitterest possible irony for any one in Keats's desperate state to read. For the brief respite which had so encouraged Severn was of the shortest duration. Hardly had Severn posted his

[1] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.
[2] Quoted in *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

letter to Mrs. Brawne before the distressing symptoms returned with even greater violence. Severn tells the despairing story of Keats's long lingering, and the unfortunate exterior circumstances, which Keats did not know, but which were a terrible anxiety to Severn, in a letter to Haslam, dated "Sunday night ½ past 11 —" and again "Rome Jan. 15, 1821." January fifteenth was a Monday, so that the letter was probably begun on Sunday and finished on Monday:

[1] "My dear Haslam

Poor Keats has just fallen asleep — I have watched him and read to him to his very last wink — he has been saying to me, 'Severn I can see under your quiet look immense twisting & contending — you don't know what you are reading — you are enduring for me more than I'll have you. O that my last hour was come — What is it that puzzles you now — what is it happens?' — I tell him that nothing happens nothing worries me beyond his seeing that it has been the dull day — getting from myself to his recovery — and then my painting — and then England — and then — but they are all lies — my heart almost leaps to deny them — for I have the veriest load of care that ever came upon these shoulders of mine — For Keats is sinking daily — he is dying of a consumption — of a confirmed consumption — perhaps another three weeks may lose me him for ever — this alone would break down the most gallant spirit — I had made sure of his recovery when I set out — I was selfish and thought of his value to me, and made a point of my future success depend on his candor to me — this is not all — I have prepared myself to bear this now — now that I must & should have seen it before — but Torlonia the banker has refused any more money — The bill has returned unaccepted 'no effects' and I tomorrow must — Aye must pay the last solitary crown for this cursed lodging place — yet more — should our unfortunate friend die, all the furniture will be burnt — beds — sheets curtains, and even the walls must be

[1] From a contemporary copy of Severn's letter. Author's Collection.

scraped, and these devil will come upon me for 100£ or 150£ the making good — but above all, this noble fellow, lying in the bed, is dying in horror, — no kind hope smoothing down his suffering, no philosophy — no religion to support him — yet with all the most gnawing desire for it — yet without the possibility of receiving it — It is not from any religious principles I feel this, but from the individual suffering of his mind in this point — I would not care from what source — so he could understand his misfortunes and glide into his lot — O my dear Haslam, this is my greatest care — a care that I pray to God may soon end — For he says in words that tear my very heart strings — 'Miserable wretch I am, — this last cheap comfort, which every rogue and fool has, is deny'd me in my last moments — yet why is this? O, I have served everyone with my utmost good yet why is this — I can't understand this —' and then his chattering teeth — if I do break down it will be under this — but I pray that some kind of comfort may come to his lot — that some Angel of goodness will lead him through this dark wilderness.

Now Haslam, what do you think of my situation — for I know not what may come with tomorrow — I am hedg'd in every way that you can look at me — If I could leave Keats for a while every day I could soon raise money by my face painting but he will not let me out of his sight — he cannot bear the face of a stranger — he has made me go out twice & leave him solus — I'd rather cut my tongue out than tell him money I must get — that would kill him at a word — I will not do any thing that may add to his misery — for I have tried on every point to leave him for a few hours in a day but he won't unless he is left alone — This won't do — nor shall not for another minute while he is John Keats. . .

I read — cook — make the beds — and do all the menial offices — for no soul comes near Keats except the Doctor and myself. . .

I have got a volume of Jeremy Taylors works which Keats has heard me read to night — this is a treasure, and came when I thought it hopeless — and may not other good things come? and even money — I will still keep myself up with the best hope.

Dr. Clark is still the same altho' he has rec'd notice about this bill. I have said to him that if Keats is wanting in any possible thing now that would give him ease, but would be out of his agreement, or at least fears the payment for, I will be answerable for it in any way he may think fit — but no — he does his every thing...

I wrote by last post to Mrs. Brawne — I think she should know these — but it will be a severe blow — see Brown too —"

At this point, Severn gives a minute description of Keats's symptoms which it is not necessary to repeat; they are those common to all tuberculous patients in the last stages. He continues:

"Keats sees all this — his knowledge of anatomy makes it tenfold worse at every change — every way he is unfortunate — I cannot see him turn any way without something to dash the cup from his lip... Poor Keats cannot read any letters — he has made me put 2 by unopened — they tear him to pieces — he dare not look upon the outside of any more — make this known — and should any communication be required to make let it come to me — I will frame it to his ear — he places the greatest confidence in me."

We know, from the letters to Fanny Brawne of the previous Summer, that Keats's anguish at his inability to accept the doctrines of Christianity was because of his longing to believe in a life after death. If he could only become convinced that he and Fanny Brawne were not to be parted forever, death would lose its sharpest agony. He let Severn read Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* to him, and he made no objection to Severn's praying beside him, but there is no reason whatever to suppose that he found the consolation for which he was seeking. Indeed, ten days later he could not bear to be read to at all. Severn wrote to Taylor on Thursday, January twenty-fifth, giving farther accounts of the progress of the disease, after which he continues:

[1] "Yet from all this he might get up if he would bear over that intense feeling — and those unfortunate combinations and passions of mind — from which no medicine in the world can relieve him — nor any other man — for they are a part of his nature — It now quite astonishes me that he has lived so long without the almost essence of human-life — I mean that sometimes calm of mind to keep the machinery of the body going — This I am certain poor Keats never possessed or even felt. He has described to me many parts of his life — of various changes — but all moving to this restless ferment — no doubt all the emotions of his mind even to his happiest sensations — have brought him to this dreary point — from which I pray God speedily to lift him up — his suffering now is beyond description — and it increases with increasing acuteness of his memory and imagination — his nerves will not bear the only illusory comfort from things that 'smell of mortality' — and to any other source he has still greater horror — he cannot bear any books — the fact is he cannot bear anything — his state is so irritable — is so every way unfortunate — that I begin to sink under the very seeing him — without the labour — without the want of rest and occupation I shall be ill from this cause alone. — The hardest point between us is that cursed unused bottle of Opium — he had determined on taking this the instant his recovery should stop — he says to save him the extended misery of a long illness — in his own mind he saw this fatal prospect — the dismal nights — the impossibility of receiving any sort of comfort — and above all the wasting of his body and [2] — these he had determined on escaping — and but for me — he would have swallowed this draught 3 months since in the ship — he says 3 wretched months I have kept him alive — and for it — no name — no treatment — no privations can be too bad for me. I cannot reason him out of this even on his own grounds but now I fall into his views on every point — before I made every sacrifice for his personal comfort & in his own way — trying every manner to satisfy him — now I must do the

[1] Unpublished letter from Severn to Taylor. Author's Collection.
[2] This word is indecipherable.

same mentally — I even say he should have this bottle — but I have given it to Dr. Clarke — the fact is I dare not trust myself with it — so anxious I was to satisfy him in everything — Poor fellow he could not read your letter when it came — although he opened it — I did not regret it for not a syllable had I let him know about the Bill — it would have killed him — I trembled when he looked at your name — but he wept most bitterly — and gave the letter to me — Dr. Clarke has rec'd yours respecting the Bill — it is now quite right — you will have received my explanations about it — and I am once more at rest about it. . .

The doctor has most certainly done all that could be done — but he says Keats should never have left England — the disorder had made too great a progress to receive benefit from this Climate — He says nothing in [the] world could cure him even when he left England — by this journey his life has been shortened — and rendered more painful."

One cannot read of the taking away of the laudanum which would have spared the dying man his horrible, lingering torture, without a feeling of rage. Who were Severn and Dr. Clark to determine whether or not Keats had a right to do away with himself under the circumstances? Nothing could more certainly have prevented Keats from accepting the religion offered him than this attitude prompted by that same religion. Suicide to hasten a painful death did not figure itself to Keats as a crime; it did to the orthodox and unimaginative men in charge of him. The mercy accorded to a dog was denied to Keats in the name of religion. It is a ghastly comment on pushing a theory to its verge. It never seems to have occurred to Dr. Clark to administer a few drops of laudanum to allay the worst suffering. Such, alas! was not the treatment of the day.

On January thirtieth, while watching beside the sick bed at three o'clock in the morning, Severn made a sketch

of Keats as he slept. This sketch is so well known that I have not reproduced it, although it is the best of Severn's many portraits of Keats.

In a postscript to his letter to Taylor, Severn speaks of Keats's nervousness and extreme debility. It was now a question of having a nurse to spell Severn, which Severn feared might not work:

> "Keats is wanting to say something or have something done every minute in the day — no one to do these — he may become irritated — for I can assure [you] his mind is bordering on the insane. 11 o'clock — The doctor has just been. Nature cannot hold out another fortnight he says . . .
>
> Keats is desiring his death with dreadful earnestness — The idea of death seems his only comfort — the only possibility of ease. He talks of it with delight — it soothes his present torture — The strangeness of his mind every day surprises me — No one feeling or one notion like any other being."

At times Keats would not even attempt to eat. Once Severn made him a cup of coffee, but he threw it away; this was repeated a second time, with the same result. On Severn's appearing still a third time with more coffee, Keats was ashamed and deeply affected. Yet, throughout all these weeks, Keats's mind was occasionally capable of its old elasticity and charm. Severn, who sat up night after night, sometimes fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. Fearing that some night the candle might burn out while he slept and Keats wake in darkness, he one evening tried the experiment of fastening a thread from the bottom of one candle to the wick of another. Keats awoke just as the first candle was guttering out, and while he waited, not liking to call Severn, the thread ignited and successfully bore the flame to the second candle, at which Keats suddenly cried out, "Severn, Severn! here's a little fairy lamplighter actually lit up the other candle."

At last Severn became so worn out for want of sleep

that an English nurse was engaged to come in for two hours every other day. Keats liked her, and this slight relief enabled Severn to keep up till the end.

During this time, as little of the truth as possible was told to Fanny Brawne, who wrote and wrote, but whose letters Keats did not dare to open. Brown wrote to Severn after receiving the account of the December collapse that, on being told of it, Mrs. Brawne was greatly agitated. He was not present when Fanny was told, but said that she bore the news "with great firmness, mournfully, but without affectation," and he adds: "I understand she says to her mother, 'I believe he must soon die, and when you hear of his death, tell me immediately. I am not a fool.'" Mrs. Brawne answered Severn's hopeful letter of January eleventh very quietly and understandingly. She deeply regretted that Keats had ever left England, and said how glad she should have been to help Severn nurse him. Severn replied on Monday, February twelfth, and he told Mrs. Brawne so much, and so near the end, that I shall quote a considerable part of the letter:

> [1] "I have just received your letter of the 15th — the contrast of your quiet friendly Hampstead with this lonely place and our poor suffering Keats brings the tears into my eyes. I wish many, many times that he had never left you. His recovery must have been impossible whilst he was in England, and his excessive grief since has made it more so. In your care he seems to me like an infant in its mother's arms — you would have smoothed down his pain by varieties, his death might have been eased by the sight of his many friends. But here, with one solitary friend, in a place else savage for an invalid he has had one more pang added to his many, for I have had the hardest task in keeping from him my painful situation. I have kept him alive by these means week after week. He had refused all food, but I tried him every way — I left him no excuse. Many times I have prepared his meals six times over, and kept

[1] Quoted in *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

from him the trouble I had in doing it. I have not been able to leave him, that is, I have not dared to do it, but when he slept. Had he come here alone he would have plunged into the grave in secret — we should never have known one syllable about him. This reflection alone repays me for all I have done. It is impossible to conceive what the sufferings of this poor fellow have been. Now he is still alive and calm. If I say more I shall say too much. Yet at times I have hoped he would recover, but the Doctor shook his head, and Keats would not hear that he was better — the thought of recovery is beyond everything dreadful to him. We now dare not perceive any improvement, for the hope of death seems his only comfort. He talks of the quiet grave as the first rest he can ever have. I can believe and feel this most truly. In the last week a great desire for books came across his mind. I got him all the books at hand and for three days this charm lasted on him, but now it is gone. Yet he is very calm — he is more and more reconciled to his fortunes.

Feb. 14th. — Little or no change has taken place in Keats since the commencement of this, except this beautiful one that his mind is growing to great quietness and peace — I find this change has its rise from the increasing weakness of his body, but it seems like a delightful sleep to me. I have been beating about in the tempest of his mind so long. To-night he has talked very much to me, but so easily that he at last fell into a pleasant sleep — he seems to have comfortable dreams without nightmare. This will bring on some change — it cannot be worse, it may be better. Among the many things he has requested of me to-night, this is the principal, that on his grave shall be this —

'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'[1]

You will understand this so well that I will not say a word about it, but is it not dreadful that he should with all his misfortunes on his mind and perhaps wrought up to

[1] Derived from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*. Act V. Scene 3:

"... all your better deeds
Shall be in water writ."

First pointed out in *Two Epitaphs*, by Harrison S. Morris. *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*. Rome. No. 2.

their abisme, end his life without one jot of human happiness? . . .

Since, a letter has come. I gave it to Keats, supposing it to be one of yours, but it proved sadly otherwise. The glance of that letter tore him to pieces. The effects were on him for many days — he did not read it — he could not, but requested me to place it in his coffin together with a purse and letter (unopened) of his sister's, since which time he has requested me not to place *that letter* in his coffin, but only his sister's purse and letter with some hair. Then [?] he found many causes of his illness in the exciting and thwarting of his passions, but I persuaded him to feel otherwise on this delicate point. In his most irritable state he sees a friendless world with everything that his life presents, particularly the kindness of his friends tending to his untimely death . . . Keats says he has fretted to death — from the first drops of blood he knew he must die. He says no common chance of living was for him."

As the weakness increased, Keats became more calm. He would lie for hours holding in his hand an oval white carnelian which Fanny Brawne had given him. Severn says that "at times it seemed his only consolation, the only thing left him in this world clearly tangible." Occasionally, during the last days, he would beg Severn to go and look at the place in the English cemetery where he was to be buried, and seemed to find a comfort on being told just where it was, near the Pyramid of Caius Cestius, with violets overflowing it; he loved violets. In these last days, too, he ordered Severn to put Fanny Brawne's letters, and any other which might come from her after his death, "inside his winding-sheet on his heart." The final days shall be told as Severn told them to Taylor after the end had come:

[1] "Four days previous to his death — the change in him was so great that I passed each moment in dread — not knowing what the next would have — he was calm and

[1] Unpublished letter. Author's Collection.

> firm at its approaches — to a most astonishing degree — he told [me] not to tremble for he did not think that he should be convulsed — he said — 'did you ever see any one die' — no — 'well then I pity you poor Severn — What trouble and Danger you have got into for me — now you must be firm for it will not last long — I shall soon be laid in the quiet grave — thank God for the quiet grave — O! I can feel the cold earth upon me — the daisies growing over me — O for the quiet — it will be my first' — when the morning light came and found him still alive O how bitterly he grieved — I cannot bear his cries — Each day he would look up in the doctor's face to discover how long he should live — he would say — 'How long will this posthumous life of mine last' — that look was more than we could ever bear — the extreme brightness of his eyes with his poor pallid face — were not earthly."

On Thursday, February twenty-second, Dr. Clark prepared Severn for the worst. Severn wrote of the end in an unsent letter[1] to Brown:

> "He is gone. He died with the most perfect ease. He seemed to go to sleep. On the 23rd, Friday, at half-past four, the approach of death came on. 'Severn — I — lift me up, for I am dying. I shall die easy. Don't be frightened! Thank God it has come.' I lifted him up in my arms and the phlegm seemed boiling in his throat. This increased until eleven at night, when he gradually sank into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept."

The next day, casts were taken of his face, hand, and foot, and on Sunday Dr. Clark, Dr. Luby, and an Italian physician, performed an autopsy. The lungs were entirely gone, the doctors could not understand how he had lived the last two months.

On Monday, a little funeral procession wound between the graves in the Protestant Cemetery. Severn, Dr. Clark, Dr. Luby, and four more. Dr. Wolff read the

[1] Quoted in *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp.

funeral service. At its close, Dr. Clark made the men put tufts of daisies on the grave, he said, "This would be poor Keats's wish, could he know it."

. . . . .

In England, a month later, Fanny Brawne wrote to Fanny Keats:

> "You will forgive me I am sure . . . that I did not write to you before, I could not for my own sake . . . for myself I am patient, resigned, very resigned. I know my Keats is happy, happier a thousand times than he could have been here, for . . . you do not, you never can know how much he suffered. So much that I do believe were it in my power I would not bring him back. All that grieves me now is that I was not with him, and so near it as I was. Some day . . . I will tell you the reason . . . and yet it was a great deal through his kindness for me for he foresaw what would happen, he at least was never deceived about his complaint, though the Doctors were ignorant and unfeeling enough to send him to that wretched country to die, for it is now known that his recovery was impossible before he left us, and he might have died here with so many friends to soothe him and me *me* with him. All we have to console ourselves with is the great joy he felt that all his misfortunes were at an end . . . The truth is I cannot very well go on at present with this, another time will tell you more . . .
>
> FRANCES BRAWNE."

That is all. The tale of John Keats's life is told. He is "among the English poets" as he greatly desired to be.

# APPENDIX A

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF KEATS'S POEMS

### Compiled According to the Latest Information

| | |
|---|---|
| 1812–1813? | *Imitation of Spenser.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| August, 1814. | *Fill for me a Brimming Bowl.* |
| December, 1814. | *On Death.* |
| December, 1814. | Sonnet: *To Byron.* |
| 1814–1815? | Sonnet: *On Peace.* (After Napoleon went to Elba, or after Waterloo.) |
| 1815. | Sonnet: *To Chatterton.* |
| February, 1815. | *To Hope.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| February, 1815. | Sonnet: *Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| February, 1815. | *Ode to Apollo.* |
| May 29, 1815? | *Lines on the Anniversary of Charles II's Restoration.* (Published for the first time.) |
| 1815. | *Woman! when I behold thee.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1815. | *To Some Ladies.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1815. | *On Receiving a Curious Shell.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1815. | Sonnet: *To a Young Lady who sent me a Laurel Crown.* |
| November, 1815. | *Sonnet to Solitude.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| November, 1815. | *Epistle to George Felton Matthew.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| February 13? 1816. | *To Georgiana Augusta Wylie.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| March, 1816. | Sonnet: *On an Engraved Gem of Leander.* |
| March, 1816. | Sonnet: *How many bards.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1816. | *O Come dearest Emma.* |
| 1816. | *Apollo and the Graces.* |
| 1816. | *You Say You Love.* |
| 1816. | *Hither, hither, love.* |
| Spring or early Summer, 1816. | *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| Spring or early Summer, 1816. | *Calidore.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1816. | *I Stood Tip-toe.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| Summer, 1816. | Sonnet: *Oh, how I love.* |
| June, 1816. | Sonnet: *To one who has been long in city pent.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |

| | |
|---|---|
| June 29, 1816. | Sonnet: *To a Friend who sent me some Roses.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| August, 1816. | Sonnet: *To my Brother George.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| August, 1816. | *Epistle to my Brother George.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| August, 1816? | Sonnet: *The Poet.* (Published for the first time.) |
| September, 1816. | *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| October, 1816. | Sonnet: *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1816. | Sonnet: *Before he went to feed with owls and bats.* |
| 1816. | *Hymn to Apollo.* |
| 1816. | Sonnet: *On Receiving a Laurel Crown from Leigh Hunt.* |
| 1816. | Sonnet: *To the Ladies who saw me Crowned.* |
| Autumn, 1816. | Sonnet: *Addressed to Haydon.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| November 18, 1816. | Sonnet: *To my Brothers.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| November 29, 1816. | Sonnet: *Great Spirits now on earth are sojourning.* (To Haydon.) (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| Early Winter, 1816. | Sonnet: *Keen, fitful gusts.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| Winter, 1816. | Sonnet: *On Leaving Some Friends at an Early Hour.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| Autumn and Winter, 1816. | *Sleep and Poetry.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| December, 1816. | Sonnet: *Happy is England.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| December, 1816. | Sonnet: *To Kosciusko.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| December, 1816. | Sonnet: *To G. A. W.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| Sunday Evening, December 22, 1816. | Sonnet: *Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition.* |
| December 30, 1816. | Sonnet: *On the Grasshopper and Cricket.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1816. | Sonnet: *As from the darkling gloom.* |
| 1816. | Sonnet: *Had I a man's fair form.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| January 31, 1817. | Sonnet: *After dark vapours.* |
| February, 1817. | Dedication Sonnet to 1817 Volume: *To Leigh Hunt, Esq.* (*Poems.* 1817.) |
| 1817. | Sonnet: *On "The Story of Rimini."* |
| February, 1817. | Sonnet: *Written at the end of "The Floure and the Lefe."* |
| March, 1817. | Two Sonnets: *To Haydon, on seeing the Elgin Marbles.* |
| April 16, 1817. | Sonnet: *On the Sea.* |
| April–November, 1817. | *Endymion.* |
| September, 1817. | *On Oxford.* |
| November 11, 1817. | *Think not of it, sweet one.* |
| 1817. | *Unfelt, unheard, unseen.* |
| December, 1817. | *In Drear-Nighted December.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1818. | *Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow.* |
| January 16, 1818. | Sonnet: *To a Cat.* |
| January 21, 1818. | *Lines on seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair.* |
| January 22, 1818. | Sonnet: *On sitting down to read "King Lear" once again.* |
| January, 1818. | Sonnet: *When I have fears.* |
| January 31, 1818. | *O blush not so!* |
| January 31, 1818. | *Hence Burgundy, Claret, and Port.* |
| February 1? 1818. | *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern.* (1820 Volume.) |
| February 3, 1818. | *Robin Hood.* (1820 Volume.) |
| February 4, 1818. | Sonnet: *To a Lady seen for a few Moments at Vauxhall.* |
| February 4, 1818. | Sonnet: *To the Nile.* |
| February 5, 1818. | Sonnet: *To Spenser.* |
| February 8, 1818. | Sonnet: *Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven.* |
| February 19, 1818 | *What the Thrush Said.* |
| February–April, 1818. | *Isabella; or The Pot of Basil.* (1820 Volume.) |
| 1818. | *Extracts from an Opera.* (Including *Daisy's Song, The Stranger lighted from his steed,* and *Asleep! O Sleep,* etc.) |
| 1818. | *Fairy Songs.* |
| 1818. | *Spirit here that reignest.* |
| 1818? | *Modern Love.* |
| 1818. | Sonnet: *To Homer.* |
| 1818. | Fragment: *The Castle Builder.* |
| March, 1818. | Sonnet: *The Human Seasons.* |
| March 21, 1818. | *Here all the Summer.* |
| March 21, 1818. | *Where be ye going, you Devon Maid?* |
| March 24, 1818. | *Over the Hill and over the Dale.* (All but first stanza published for the first time.) |
| March 25, 1818. | *Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds.* |
| April 20 or 21, 1818. | Sonnet: *To J. R.* |
| May 1, 1818. | *Ode to Maia.* (Fragment.) |
| June 27, 1818. | *Acrostic to Georgiana Augusta Keats.* |
| June 28, 1818. | *Sweet, sweet is the greeting of eyes.* (Published for the first time.) |
| July 1, 1818. | Sonnet: *On Visiting the Tomb of Burns.* |
| July 3, 1818. | *Meg Merrilies.* |
| July 3, 1818. | *There was a naughty Boy.* |
| July 9, 1818. | *A Galloway Song.* |
| July 10, 1818. | Sonnet: *To Ailsa Rock.* |
| July 11, 1818. | Sonnet: *Written in the Cottage where Burns was born.* |
| July, 1818. | *Lines written in the Highlands after a visit to Burns's Country.* |
| July 17, 1818. | Sonnet: *On Hearing the Bag-pipe.* |
| July 24, 1818. | *Staffa.* |
| August 2, 1818. | Sonnet: *Written on the Top of Ben Nevis.* |
| August 3, 1818. | *Ben Nevis.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| September, 1818. | Translation of a Sonnet by Ronsard. |
| Late September, 1818. | *Vision of Hyperion* begun. |
| October, 1818. | *A Prophecy.* ("'Tis the witching hour of night.") |
| December, 1818. | *Fancy.* (1820 Volume.) |
| December, 1818. | *Bards of Passion and of Mirth.* (1820 Volume.) |
| December, 1818. | *I had a Dove.* |
| 1818. | *Hush, Hush! tread softly.* |
| 1818. | *Where's the Poet?* |
| 1818. | Spenserian Stanza: *In after time, a sage of mickle lore.* |
| December, 1818–April, 1819. | *Hyperion.* |
| January, 1819. | *Ode to Fanny.* |
| January–September, 1819. | *The Eve of St. Agnes.* (1820 Volume.) |
| February 13–17–September, 1819. | *The Eve of St. Mark.* |
| March, 1819. | Sonnet: *Why did I laugh to-night?* |
| April, 1819. | Sonnet: *Bright Star, would I were steadfast as thou art.* |
| April 15, 1819. | *An Extempore.* |
| April 16, 1819. | *Spenserian Stanzas on Charles Brown.* |
| April, 1819. | Sonnet: *As Hermes once took to his feathers light.* |
| April 17, 1819. | *Two or three Posies.* |
| April 28, 1819. | *La Belle Dame Sans Merci.* |
| End of April, 1819. | *Song of Four Fairies.* |
| Spring, 1819. | Sonnet: *To Sleep.* |
| End of April, 1819. | Two Sonnets: *On Fame.* |
| April, 1819. | *Ode to Psyche.* (1820 Volume.) |
| April, 1819. | *Experimental Sonnet.* |
| May, 1819. | *Ode on a Grecian Urn.* (1820 Volume.) |
| May, 1819. | *Ode on Melancholy.* (1820 Volume.) |
| May, 1819. | *Ode to a Nightingale.* (1820 Volume.) |
| May, 1819. | *Ode on Indolence.* |
| July–August, 1819. | *Lamia.* (1820 Volume.) |
| July, 1819. | *Gripus.* (Fragment.) (Published for the first time.) |
| July–August, 1819. | *Otho the Great.* |
| September 17, 1819. | *A Party of Lovers.* |
| September 19, 1819. | Ode: *To Autumn.* (1820 Volume.) |
| September, 1819. | *Vision of Hyperion* resumed. |
| October 10, 1819. | Sonnet: *The day is gone.* |
| October, 1819. | *Lines to Fanny.* |
| November, 1819. | *King Stephen.* |
| November, 1819. | Sonnet: *To Fanny.* |
| November–December, 1819. | *The Cap and Bells.* |
| Autumn, 1819. | *This living hand, now warm and capable.* |

# APPENDIX B

## THE *GRIPUS* FRAGMENT

As it appears in the Woodhouse Book. Morgan Library

And gold and silver are but filthy dross
Then seek not gold and silver which are dross
But rather lay thy treasure up in heav'n! —
Heav'n!
And thou has meat & drink and lodging too
And clothing too, what more can man require?
And thou art single —
But I must lay up money for my children
My children's children & my great grand children
For Slim! thy master will be shortly married —
Married!
Yea! married wherefore dost thou stare
As tho' my words had spoke of aught impossible
My lord I stare not but my ears play'd false
Methought you had said married.
Married fool!
Is't aught unlikely I'm not very old
And my intended has a noble fortune
My lord 'tis likely
Haste thou to the butcher's
And ere thou go, tell Bridget she is wanted —
I go — Gods! what a subject for an ode
With Hymen Cupid's Venus — loves & graces exit
Gripus Solus.
This matrimony is no light affair
'Tis downright venture & mere speculation
Less risk there is in what the merchant trusts
To winds & waves and the uncertain elements
For he can have assurance for his goods
And put himself beyond the reach of losses —
But who can e'er ensure to me a wife
Industrious and managing and frugal
Who will not spend far more than she has brought
But be almost as saving to her husband —
But none can tell — the broker cannot tell
He is not cheated in the wares he buys
And to judge well of woman or the seas
Would oft surpass the wisest merchants' prudence
For both are deep alike — capricious too —
And the worst things that money can be sunk in —

But Bridget comes —
Your pleasure Sir with me
Bridget I wish to have a little converse
Upon a matter that concerns us both
Of like importance both to thee and me
Of like importance and concerning both
What can your Honour have to say to me
Oh Lord! I would give all that I am worth
To know what tis. —
Then pray thee rein thy tongue
That ever battles with thine own impatience —
But to the point — thou knows't for twenty years
Together we have liv'd as man and wife —
But never hath the sanction of the Church
Stamp'd its legality upon our union —
B. Well what of that —
Why when in wiser years
Men look upon the follies of their youth
They oft repent — and wish to make amends
And seek for happier in more virtuous days
In such a case & such is mine I own
Tis marriage offers us the readiest way
To make atonement for our former deeds
And thus have I determin'd in my heart
To make amends — in other words to marry —
O lord! how overjoy'd I am to hear it!
I vow that I have often thought myself
What wickedness it was to live as we did!
But do you joke —
Not so upon my oath —
I am resolv'd to marry and beget
A little heir to leave my little wealth to
I am not old — my hair is hardly grey
My health is good — what hast thou to object?
O dear how close your honour puts the question
I've said as much already as was fit
And incompatible with female modesty —
But would your honour please to name a day?
G. To name a day! but hark I hear a knock
'Tis perhaps young Prodigal I did expect him —
B. But Sir — a day?
Zounds! dost thou hear the bell
Wilt thou not run — he was to bring me money —
(exit B. & returns)
'Tis he I've shown him to the little study —
Then stay thee here and when I've settled him
I will return & hold more converse with thee. (exit.)
B. Solus My head runs round O what a happy change!
Now I shall be another woman quite —

Dame Bridget then adieu and don't forget
Your lady Gripus now that is to be;
Great Lady Gripus — O lord —
The Lady of the old and rich Sir Gripus! —
O how will people whisper as I pass —
There goes my lady — what a handsome gownd
All scarlet silk embroidered with gold
Or green & gold will perhaps become me better
How vastly fine — how handsome I shall be
In green & gold — besides a lady too —
I'll have a footman too — to walk behind me
Slim is too slender to set off a livery
I must have one more lustier than him
A proper man to walk behind his lady
O how genteel — methinks I see myself
In green and gold and carrying my fan
*Or perhaps I'd have a ridicule about me*
The lusty footman all so spruce behind me
Walking on tiptoe in a bran new livery
And he shall have a favour in his hat
As sure as ever I am lady Gripus! —
Enter Slim
Why how now Bridget you're turn'd actress sure!
An actor fellow in to something better
To something grander and more lady like!
Know I am turn'd
a lunatic 'tis plain
But lovee leave this jesting for a while
And hear thy servant who thus pleads for favour
For favour Sirrah! but I must be kind
I will forget your insolence this once
And condescend to keep you in my service
But no — I want a much more lustier man
You are too slender to become my livery
I must excard you — you must suit yourself —
Why how now Bridget
You forget me sure
Forget thee Bridget never from my heart
Shall thy dear image part
Ah no
I love you so
No language can impart
Alas! 'tis love that makes me thin
I have a fiery flame within
That burns and shrivels up my skin
'Tis Cupid's little dart
And by this kiss I swear (attempts to kiss her)
B. Ruffin begone or I will tell my Lord
Do you not care for difference of rank

Nor make distinction between dirt and dignity
Why Bridget once you did not treat me thus —
No — times are alter'd — Fortune's wheel is turn'd
You still are Slim but tho' I once was Bridget
Did not his Honour tell me he should marry —
Yea — to a lady of ample fortune —
Why that you fool he said in allegolly
A virtuous woman is she not a crown
A crown of gold and glory to her husband —
Heaven is it possible — I pray forgive me
That I could doubt a moment of that fortune
Which is but due to your assembled merits —
Well Slim I do not wish to harbour malice
But while you show a proper due respect
You may be certain of my condescention —
But — hark! I hear his lordship on the stairs
And we must have some privacy together. (ex. S.)
O lord how overjoy'd I am your honour —

G. Bridget I thank thee for thy friendly zeal
That seems to glory in thy Master's bliss —
And much it grieves me that I can't requite it
Except by mere reciprocal good-wishes —
For as a change in my domestic government
Will make thy place in future but a sinecure
It grieves me much that I must warn you thus
To seek and get a situation elsewhere. —
O dear — O lord — what a shock — O lord! (faints)

G. Ho! Slim — the devils in the fool to faint
Halloo! — what shall I do — halloo! halloo
Ho! Slim I say — run Sirrah! for the brandy

S. The brandy Sir — there is none in the house! —

G. No brandy! none! what none at all thou knave
What none at all! thou rascal thou hast drunk it
Why Bridget, Bridget, — what! no brandy knave
Zounds! what a fit — Where is my brandy Wretch!
Thou toping Villain say or I will slay thee —
(lets Bridget fall & collars Slim)

S. O lord — forgive me — Bridget had the wind
And drank the brandy up to warm her stomach

G. A tipsy Bacchanal! then let her lie!
I'll not be drunken out of house and home
Zounds! brandy for the wind — a cure indeed!
A little water had done just as well
This is the way then when I want a drop
I always find my cellar is stark naked
But both shall go yes — I discard ye — Thieves!
Begone ye thieves!

(Bridget jumps up)
No not without my wages

I'll have a month's full wages or my warning
I'll not be left at non-plush for a place —
G. A month's full warning — what another month!
To sack to ransack and to strip the house
And then depart in triumph with your booty
Begone I say
No not without my wages!
And I'll have damages you cruel man
I will convict you of a breach of marriage
Begone I say. Deceitful Thing! begone —
Who ever dar'd to promise such a match
But thy own fancy — & thy lying tongue
What marry one as poor as a church mouse!
And equally devoid of rank and beauty
Reason would sleep and prudence would be blind
And Gripus then would be no longer Gripus
But only fitting for more sober men
To lodge in Bedlam & to call a lunatic.

## THE *GRIPUS* FRAGMENT

SPACED AND PUNCTUATED BY ME. A.L.

*Gripus* And gold and silver are but filthy dross.
Then seek not gold and silver, which are dross,
But rather lay thy treasure up in heav'n.

*Slim* Heav'n!

*Gripus* And thou hast meat and drink and lodging too,
And clothing too. What more can man require?
And thou art single.
But I must lay up money for my children,
My children's children, and my great-grandchildren.
For, Slim, thy master will be shortly married.

*Slim* Married!

*Gripus* Yea, married. Wherefore dost thou stare
As tho' my words had spoke of aught impossible?

*Slim* My lord, I stare not, but my ears play'd false.
Methought you had said married.

*Gripus* Married, fool!
Is't aught unlikely? I'm not very old,
And my intended has a noble fortune.

*Slim* My lord, 'tis likely.

*Gripus* Haste thou to the butcher's,
And, ere thou go, tell Bridget she is wanted.

*Slim* I go. Gods! What a subject for an ode,
With Hymen Cupid's Venus. Loves and graces! (Exit.)
(Gripus solus.)

*Gripus* This matrimony is no light affair,
'Tis downright venture and mere speculation.
Less risk there is in what the merchant trusts
To winds and waves and the uncertain elements,
For he can have assurance for his goods
And put himself beyond the reach of losses.
But who can e'er ensure to me a wife
Industrious and managing and frugal,
Who will not spend far more than she has brought
But be almost as saving to her husband?
But none can tell. The broker cannot tell
He is not cheated in the wares he buys,
And to judge well of woman or the seas
Would oft surpass the wisest merchants' prudence,
For both are deep alike, capricious too,
And the worst things that money can be sunk in.
But Bridget comes. (Enter Bridget.)

*Bridget* Your pleasure, Sir, with me?

*Gripus* Bridget, I wish to have a little converse
Upon a matter that concerns us both,
Of like importance both to thee and me,
Of like importance and concerning both.

*Bridget* What can your Honour have to say to me?
Oh Lord! I would give all that I am worth
To know what 'tis!

*Gripus* Then pray thee rein thy tongue
That ever battles with thine own impatience.
But, to the point. Thou knows't for twenty years
Together we have liv'd as man and wife,
But never hath the sanction of the Church
Stamp'd its legality upon our union.

*Bridget* Well, what of that?

*Gripus* Why, when in wiser years
Men look upon the follies of their youth,
They oft repent, and wish to make amends,
And seek for happier in more virtuous days.
In such a case, and such is mine, I own,

'Tis marriage offers us the readiest way
To make atonement for our former deeds.
And thus have I determin'd in my heart
To make amends — in other words, to marry.

*Bridget* O Lord! How overjoy'd I am to hear it!
I vow that I have often thought myself
What wickedness it was to live as we did.
But do you joke?

*Gripus* Not so, upon my oath!
I am resolved to marry and beget
A little heir to leave my little wealth to.
I am not old, my hair is hardly grey,
My health is good. What hast thou to object?

*Bridget* O dear! How close your Honour puts the question!
I've said as much already as was fit
And incompatible with female modesty.
But would your Honour please to name a day?

*Gripus* To name a day! But, hark! I hear a knock.
'Tis perhaps young Prodigal, I did expect him.

*Bridget* But, Sir, a day —

*Gripus* Zounds! Dost thou hear the bell?
Wilt thou not run? He was to bring me money.
(Exit Bridget and returns)

*Bridget* 'Tis he. I've shown him to the little study.

*Gripus* Then stay thee here, and when I've settled him
I will return and hold more converse with thee. (Exit)
(Bridget solus)

*Bridget* My head runs round. O what a happy change!
Now I shall be another woman quite.
Dame Bridget then adieu, and don't forget
Your lady Gripus now that is to be.
Great Lady Gripus! O Lord!
The Lady of the old and rich Sir Gripus!
O how will people whisper as I pass!
"There goes my lady. What a handsome gownd,
All scarlet silk embroidered with gold!"
Or green and gold will perhaps become me better.
How vastly fine, how handsome I shall be
In green and gold — besides, a lady too!
I'll have a footman, too, to walk behind me.
Slim is too slender to set off a livery,
I must have one more lustier than him,

A proper man to walk behind his lady.
O how genteel! Methinks I see myself
In green and gold and carrying my fan,
*Or perhaps I'd have a ridicule about me,*
The lusty footman all so spruce behind me,
Walking on tiptoe in a bran new livery,
And he shall have a favour in his hat
As sure as ever I am Lady Gripus.

(Enter Slim)

*Slim* Why, how now, Bridget? You're turn'd actress sure!

*Bridget* An actor, fellow! Into something better,
To something grander and more lady like!
Know I am turn'd —

*Slim* A lunatic, 'tis plain.
But, lovee, leave this jesting for a while
And hear thy servant who thus pleads for favour.

*Bridget* For favour, Sirrah! But I must be kind,
I will forget your insolence this once,
And condescend to keep you in my service.
But no — I want a much more lustier man,
You are too slender to become my livery.
I must excard you — you must suit yourself.

*Slim* Why, how now, Bridget?

*Bridget* You forget me sure.

*Slim* Forget thee, Bridget? Never from my heart
Shall thy dear image part.
Ah, no,
I love you so,
No language can impart.
Alas! 'tis love that makes me thin,
I have a fiery flame within,
That burns and shrivels up my skin.
'Tis Cupid's little dart
And by this kiss I swear (attempts to kiss her)

*Bridget* Ruffin, begone, or I will tell my Lord.
Do you not care for difference of rank
Nor make distinction between dirt and dignity?

*Slim* Why, Bridget, once you did not treat me thus.

*Bridget* No. Times are alter'd. Fortune's wheel is turn'd.

You still are Slim, but tho' I once was Bridget,
Did not his Honour tell me he should marry.

*Slim* Yea, to a lady of an ample fortune.

*Bridget* Why, that, you fool, he said in allegolly.
A virtuous woman, is she not a crown,
A crown of gold and glory to her husband?

*Slim* Heaven! Is it possible? I pray forgive me
That I could doubt a moment of that fortune
Which is but due to your assembled merits.

*Bridget* Well, Slim, I do not wish to harbour malice,
But while you show a proper due respect
You may be certain of my condescention.
But — hark! I hear his lordship on the stairs,
And we must have some privacy together.
(Exit Slim and enter Gripus)

*Bridget* O Lord! How overjoy'd I am, your Honour!

*Gripus* Bridget, I thank thee for thy friendly zeal
That seems to glory in thy Master's bliss,
And much it grieves me that I can't requite it
Except by mere reciprocal good wishes.
For, as a change in my domestic government
Will make thy place in future but a sinecure,
It grieves me much that I must warn you thus
To seek and get a situation elsewhere.

*Bridget* O dear! O Lord! What a shock! O Lord! (faints)

*Gripus* Ho! Slim! The devil's in the fool to faint.
Halloo! What shall I do? Halloo! Halloo!
Ho! Slim, I say. Run, Sirrah, for the brandy.

*Slim* The brandy, Sir? There is none in the house.

*Gripus* No brandy! None! What, none at all, thou knave?
What, none at all, thou rascal! Thou hast drunk it.
Why, Bridget, Bridget. What! No brandy, knave!
Zounds! what a fit! Where is my brandy, Wretch?
Thou toping Villain, say, or I will slay thee.
(Lets Bridget fall and collars Slim)

*Slim* O Lord! Forgive me. Bridget had the wind
And drank the brandy up to warm her stomach.

*Gripus* A tipsy Bacchanal! Then let her lie.
I'll not be drunken out of house and home.
Zounds! Brandy for the wind! A cure indeed!
A little water had done just as well.
This is the way, then, when I want a drop
I always find my cellar is stark naked.
But both shall go. Yes, I discard ye. Thieves!
Begone, ye thieves!
(Bridget jumps up)

*Bridget* No, not without my wages.
I'll have a month's full wages or my warning.
I'll not be left at non-plush for a place.

*Gripus* A month's full warning! What, another month
To sack, to ransack, and to strip the house,
And then depart in triumph with your booty!
Begone, I say.

*Bridget* No, not without my wages!
And I'll have damages, you cruel man,
I will convict you of a breach of marriage.

*Gripus* Begone, I say. Deceitful Thing, begone.
Who ever dar'd to promise such a match
But thy own fancy and thy lying tongue?
What, marry one as poor as a church mouse
And equally devoid of rank and beauty!
Reason would sleep and prudence would be blind
And Gripus then would be no longer Gripus,
But only fitting for more sober men
To lodge in Bedlam and to call a lunatic.

# APPENDIX C

## ANNOTATIONS AND UNDERSCORED PASSAGES IN BOOKS OWNED OR BORROWED BY KEATS

### A VOLUME OF SPENSER CONTAINING THE FIRST CANTO OF *THE FAIRY QUEEN*.[1]

This is the first volume of *The Works of Mr. Edmund Spenser, in Six Volumes*, published by Mr. Hughes. London. Printed for Jacob Tonson. 1715.

On the title-page is written: "George Keats. 1816." There is a hieroglyph in the corner, which has been supposed to be "J. K." I cannot make it out as such, but the only annotation proper (in distinction to marks and underscorings) is certainly by John Keats. Both brothers marked their books, but John was more given to the practice than George, and for three reasons I feel quite sure that the poet and not his brother is responsible for those in this volume. The first reason is George Keats's express statement to Mr. James Freeman Clarke that this particular Spenser was much used by John; the second, that the only annotation is indubitably in John's handwriting; the third, that the handwriting of the brothers is totally unlike, John's being far the bolder of the two. George bore more lightly on his pen than John, with the consequence that his strokes are thinner and more capable of the "shading" in vogue at the period. Comparing the pen lines with which the text is scored with those in the *Poems* given by John to George the difference is very noticeable. The pen marks in the *Poems* are so light as to be almost broken at times, as though the pen were thrown up by the inequalities of the paper, causing the line it drew to seem almost as if composed of a series of dots; those in the Spenser are firm and continuous as in all the books marked by the poet which I have seen. John's lines are also much less regular than George's. There are four underscorings which I have no hesitation in pronouncing to be by George Keats; and so firmly do I believe this that I have not included them here.

I have followed Keats's marks exactly throughout. Where, for the sake of clarity, it has been necessary to quote lines not marked by the poet, either immediately before or after those he has chosen, such lines are printed without marks.

The First Book only of the *Fairy Queen* appears in this volume, for which reason I have merely indicated the cantos and stanzas.

Introduction. Me, all to mean, the sacred Muse areeds
Stanza I. To blazon 'broad, amongst her learned Throng:
Fierce Warres, and faithful Loves, shall moralize my Song.

[1] Author's Collection.

Introduction. Stanza II.

Lay forth out of thine everlasting Scrine
The antique Rolls, which there lie hidden still,
Of Fairy Knights,

Introduction. Stanza III.

Lay now thy deadly Heben Bowe apart,
And with thy Mother mild come to mine ayd:

Canto I. Stanza I.

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the Plain,
Yclad in mightie Arms and silver Shield,

C. I. S. II.

But of his Cheere did seem too solemn sad:
Yet nothing did he dread, but ever was ydrad.

C. I. S. IV.

A lovely Lady rode him fair beside,
Upon a lowly Asse more white than Snow;
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a Veil, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a black Stole she did throw,
As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
And heavie sat upon her Palfrey slow;
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milk-white Lamb she lad.

C. I. S. V.

So pure an Innocent, as that same Lamb,
She was in Life and every vertuous Lore,
And by Descent from Royall Lynage came
Of ancient Kings and Queens, that had of yore
Their Scepters stretcht from East to Western Shore,

C. I. S. VI.

Behind her farr away a Dwarf did lag,
That lazie seem'd in being ever last,
Or wearied with bearing of her Bag
Of Needments at his Back.

C. I. S. VII.

A shadie Grove not farr away they spide,
That promist Aid the Tempest to withstand:
Whose loftly Trees, yclad with Summer's Pride,
Did spread so broad, they Heaven's Light did hide,
Not perceable with power of any Starr:
And all within were Paths and Alleys wide,
With footing worne, and leading inward farr:

C. I. S. VIII.

The sailing Pine, the Cedar proud and tall,
The Vine-prop Elm, the Poplar never dry,
The builder Oak, sole King of Forrests all,
The Aspine good for Staves, the Cypress Funeral.

C. I. S. IX.

The Laurel, Meed of mighty Conquerors
And Poets sage, the Firr that weepeth still,
The Willow, worn of forlorne Paramours,
The Ewe, obedient to the Bender's will,
The Birch for Shafts, the Sallow for the Mill,
The Mirrhe, sweet bleeding in the bitter Wound,
The warlike Beech, the Ash for nothing ill,
The fruitful Olive, and the Platane round,
The Carver Holme, the Maple seldom inward found.

C. I. S. XI.

At length it brought them to a hollow Cave,
Amid the thickest Woods. The Champion stout
Eftsoons dismounted from his Courser brave,
And to the Dwarf awhile his needless Spear he gave.

C. I. S. XIV.

His glistring Armour made
A little glooming Light, much like a Shade,

C. I. S. XV.

Her huge long Tail her Den all overspred,
Yet was in Knots and many Boughtes upwound,
Pointed with mortal Sting. . . .
. . . . .
Soon as that uncouth Light upon them shone,
Into her Mouth they crept, and sudden all were gone.

C. I. S. XVI.

Their Dam upstart, out of her Den effraide,
And rushed forth, hurling her hideous Tail
About her cursed Head; whose Folds display'd
Were stretch'd now forth at length without Entrail.

C. I. S. XVII.

And turning fierce, her speckled Tail advaunc'd,

C. I. S. XVIII.

Much daunted with that Dint, her Sense was daz'd,
Yet kindling Rage, she her self gathered round,
And all at once her beastly Body rais'd
With doubled Forces high above the Ground:
Tho wrapping up her wreathed Stern around,
Lept fierce upon his Shield, and her huge Train
All suddenly about his Body wound,
That Hand or Foot to stir he strove in vain:
God help the Man so wrapt in Error's endless Train.

C. I. S. XX.

Therewith she spew'd out of her filthy Maw
A flood of Poison horrible and black,
Full of great Lumps of Flesh and Gobbets raw,
Which stunk so vildly, that it forc'd him slack
His grasping hold, and from her turn him back:
Her Vomit full of Books and Papers was,
With loathly Frogs and Toads, which Eyes did lack,
And creeping, sought way in the weedy Grass:
Her filthy Parbreake all the Place defiled has.

C. 1. S. XXI.

As when old Father Nilus 'gins to swell
With timely Pride above th' Ægyptian Vale,
His fatty Waves do fertile Slime outwell,
And overflow each Plain and lowly Dale:

C. 1. S. XXII.

Deformed Monsters, foul, and black as ink;
Which swarming all about his Legs did crawll,

C. 1. S. XXIII.

As gentle Shepherd in sweet Even-tide,
When ruddy Phœbus 'gins to welk in West,
High on an Hill, his Flock to vewen wide,
Marks which do bite their hasty Supper best;
A Cloud of cumbrous Gnats do him molest,
All striving to infix their feeble Stings,
That from their noyance he no where can rest,
But with his clownish Hands their tender Wings
He brusheth oft, and oft doth mar their Murmurings.

C. 1. S. XXIX.

At length they chaunst to meet upon the way
An aged Sire, in long black Weeds yclad,
His Feet all bare, his Beard all hoary Gray,
And by his Belt his Book he hanging had;
Sober he seem'd, and very sagely sad,
And to the Ground his Eyes were lowly bent,
Simple in shew, and void of Malice bad,
And all the way he prayed, as he went,
And often knock'd his Breast, as one that did repent.

C. 1. S. XXX.

Silly old Man, that lives in hidden Cell,
Bidding his Beads all day for his Trespass,

C. 1. S. XXXII.

Far hence (quoth he) in wastful Wilderness
His Dwelling is, by which no living Wight
May ever pass, but thorough great Distress.
. . . . . .
The Sun that measures Heaven all day long,
At Night doth bait his Steeds the Ocean Waves emong.

C. 1. S. XXXIV.

A little lowly Hermitage it was,
Down in a Dale, hard by a Forests side,
Far from resort of People, that did pass
In Travel to and fro: a little wide
There was an holy Chappel edify'd,
Werein the Hermit duely wont to say
His holy things each Morn and Even-tyde:
Thereby a Chrystal Stream did gently play,
Which from a sacred Fountain welled forth alway.

C. 1. S. XXXV.

For that old Man of pleasing Words had store,
And well could file his Tongue as smooth as Glass;
He told of Saints and Popes, and evermore
He strow'd an Ave-Mary after and before.

C. 1. S. XXXVI.

The drooping Night thus creepeth on them fast,
And the sad Humour loading their Eye-lids,
As Messenger of Morpheus on them cast
Sweet slumbering Dew, the which to sleep them bids.
Unto their Lodgings then his Guests he ridds:
Where when all drown'd in deadly sleep he finds,
He to his Study goes, and there amidds
His Magick Books and Arts of sundry kinds,
He seeks out mighty Charms to trouble sleepy Minds.

C. 1. S. XXXVIII.

And forth he call'd, out of deep Darkness dread,
Legions of Sprights, the which like little Flies
Fluttring about his ever-damned Head,

C. 1. S. XXXIX.

He making speedy way through spersed Air,
And through the World of Waters wide and deep,
To Morpheus' House doth hastily repair.
Amid the Bowels of the Earth full steep,
And low, where dawning Day doth never peep,
His dwelling is; there Thetis his wet Bed
Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steep
In silver Dew his ever-drooping Head,
Whiles sad Night over him her Mantle black doth spread.

C. 1. S. XL.

By them the Sprite doth pass in quietly,
And unto Morpheus comes, whom drowned deep,
In drowsy Fit he finds; of nothing he takes keep.

C. 1. S. XLI.

And more, to lull him in his Slumber soft,
A trickling Stream from high Rock tumbling down,
And ever drizling Rain upon the Loft,
Mixt with a murmuring Wind, much like the Sound
Of swarming Bees, did cast him in a Swoon:

C. 1. S. XLII.

The Messenger approaching, to him spake,
But his waste words return'd to him in vain:
So sound he slept, that nought mought him awake.
Then rudely he him thrust, and push'd with Pain,
Whereat he 'gan to stretch: but he again
Shook him so hard, that forced him to speak.
As one then in a Dream, whose dryer Brain
Is tost with troubled Sights and Fancies weak,
He mumbled soft, but would not all his Silence break.

C. 1. S. XLIII.

The Sprite then 'gan more boldly him to wake,
And threatned unto him the dreaded Name
Of Hecate; whereat he 'gan to quake,
And lifting up his lumpish Head, with blame,
Half angry, asked him, For what he came.
Hither (quoth he) me Archimago sent,
He that the stubborn Sprites can wisely tame,
He bids thee to him send, for his intent,
A fit false Dream, that can delude the Sleepers sent.

C. 1. S. XLIV.

The God obey'd, and calling forth straight-way
A diverse Dream out of his Prison dark,
Deliver'd it to him, and down did lay
His heavy Head, devoid of careful cark,
Whose Senses all were straight benumb'd and stark.
He back returning by the Ivory Door,
Remounted up as light as chearful Lark,
And on his little Wings the Dream he bore
In haste unto his Lord, where he him left afore.

C. 1. S. XLV.

Who all this while with Charms and hidden Arts,
Had made a Lady of that other Spright,
And fram'd of liquid Air her tender parts
So lively, and so like in all Mens sight,
That weaker Sense it could have ravish'd quite:
The Maker's self, for all his wondrous Wit,
Was nigh beguiled with so goodly sight:
Her all in white he clad, and over it
Cast a black Stole, most like to seem for Una fit.

C. 1. S. XLVII.

Then seemed him his Lady by him lay,
And to him plain'd, how that false winged Boy
Her chaste Heart had subdu'd, to learn Dame Pleasure's Toy.

C. 1. S. XLVIII.

And she her self, of Beauty soveraign Queen,
Fair Venus, seem'd unto his Bed to bring
Her, whom he waking evermore did ween
To be the chastest Flower that ay did spring
On earthly Bronch, the Daughter of a King,
Now a loose Leman to vile Service bound:
And eke the Graces seemed all to sing
Hymen Iö Hymen, dancing all around,
Whilst freshest Flora her with Ivy Garland crown'd.

C. 1. S. XLIX.

Lo there before his Face his Lady is,
Under black Stole hiding her baited Hook,
And as half blushing, offer'd him to kiss,
With gentle Blandishment and lovely Look,

C. 1. S. L. ‖Wringing her Hands in Womens piteous wise,

C. 1. S. LII.
And then again begun: My weaker Years
Captiv'd to Fortune and frail worldly Fears,
Fly to your Faith for Succour and sure Aid:
|Let me not die in Languor and long Tears.

C. 1. S. LIV.
Not all content, yet seem'd she to appease
Her mournful Plaints, beguiled of her Art,
And fed with Words that could not chuse but please,
So sliding softly forth, she turn'd as to her Ease.

C. 1. S. LV.
At last dull weariness of former Fight
Having yrock'd asleep his irksome Spright,
That troublous Dream 'gan freshly toss his Brain,

C. 2. S. I.
By this the Northern Waggoner had set
His sevenfold Teme behind the stedfast Star,
That was in Ocean Waves yet never wet,
But firm is fix'd, and sendeth Light from far
To all, that in the wide Deep wandring are:
And chearful Chaunticleer, with his Note shrill,
Had warned once, that Phœbus' fiery Carr
In haste was climbing up the Eastern Hill,
Full envious that Night so long his Room did fill.

C. 2. S. III.
Eftsoons he took that miscreated Fair,
And that false other Spright, on whom he spred
A seeming Body of the subtle Air,
Like a young Squire, in Loves and Lusty-hed;
His wanton Days that ever loosely led,
Without regard of Arms and dreaded Fight:
Those two he took, and in a secret Bed,
Cover'd with Darkness and misdeeming Night,
Them both together laid, to joy in vain Delight.

C. 2. S. VII.
Now when the rosy-fingerd Morning fair,
Weary of aged Tithon's saffron Bed,
Had spred her purple Robe through dewy Air,
And the high Hills Titan discovered,
The royal Virgin shook off drowsy-hed,
And rising forth out of her baser Bower,
Look'd for her Knight, who far away was fled,
And for her Dwarf, that wont to wait each Hour;
Then 'gan she wail and weep, to see that woful stower.

C. 2. S. VIII.
Yet she her weary Limbs would never rest,
But every Hill and Dale, each Wood and Plain
Did search, fore grieved in her gentle Breast,
He so ungently left her, whom she loved best.

C. 2. S. IX.

For her he hated as the hissing Snake,
And in her many Troubles did most pleasure take.

C. 2. S. XI.

But now seem'd best, the Person to put on
Of that good Knight, his late beguiled Guest:
In mighty Arms he was yclad anon,
And silver Shield; upon his Coward Breast
A bloody Cross, and on his craven Crest
A bunch of Hairs discolour'd diversly:
Full jolly Knight he seem'd, and well address'd,
And when he sat upon his Courser free,
Saint George himself ye would have deemed him to be.

C. 2. S. XII.

Will was his Guide, and Grief led him astray.

C. 2. S. XIII.

A goodly Lady clad in scarlet Red,
Purfled with Gold and Pearl in rich assay,
And like a Persian Mitre on her Head
She wore, with Crowns and Owches garnished,
The which her lavish Lovers to her gave;
Her wanton Palfrey all was overspred
With tinsel Trappings, woven like a Wave,
Whose Bridle rung with golden Bells and Bosses brave.

C. 2. S. XIV.

With fair disport and courting dalliance
She entertain'd her Lover all the way:

C. 2. S. XVI.

. . . with the Terror of the Shock
Astonied, both stand senseless as a Block,
Forgetful of the hanging Victory:

C. 2. S. XIX.

. . . his grudging Ghost did strive
With the frail Flesh; at last it flitted is,
Whither the Souls do fly, of Men that live amiss.

C. 2. S. XX.

The Lady, when she saw her Champion fall,
Like the old Ruins of a broken Tower,

C. 2. S. XXVI.

In this sad plight, friendless, unfortunate.

C. 2. S. XXVII.

With change of Chear the seeming simple Maid
Let fall her eyne, as shamefac'd, to the Earth,
And yielding soft, in that she nought gain-said;
So forth they rode, he feigning seemly Mirth,
And she coy Looks:

C. 2. S. XXVIII.

... two goodly Trees, that fair did spred
Their Arms abroad, with grey Moss over-cast;
And their green Leaves trembling with every Blast,
Made a calm Shadow far in compass round:

C. 2. S. XXX

And thinking of those Branches green to frame
A Garland for her dainty Forehead fit,

C. 2. S. XXXII.

At last, when as the dreadful Passion
Was over past, and Manhood well awake,

C. 2. S. XXXV.

The fire of Love and Joy of Chevalree

C. 2. S. XXXVIII.

And by her hellish Science rais'd straightway
A foggy Mist that overcast the day,
And a dull Blast, that breathing on her Face,
Dimmed her former Beauties shining Ray,

C. 2. S. XL.

I chaunst to see her in her proper Hew,
Bathing herself in Origane and Thyme:

C. 2. S. XLV.

... Her Eye-lids blew
And dimmed sight with pale and deadly Hew,
At last she up 'gan lift: with trembling chear
Her up he took, too simple and too true,
And oft her kist.

C. 3. S. I.

Nought is there under Heav'ns wide hollowness
That moves more dear Compassion of Mind,
Than Beauty brought t' unworthy Wretchedness
Through Envy's Snares or Fortune's Freaks unkind:
I, whether lately through her Brightness blind,
Or through Allegiance and fast Fealty,
Which I do owe unto all Woman-kind,
Feel my Heart pierc'd with so great Agony,
When such I see, that all for pity I could die.

C. 3. S. II.

And now it is empassioned so deep,
For fairest Una's sake,

C. 3. S. IV.

From her unhasty Beast she did alight,
And on the Grass her dainty Limbs did lay
In secret Shadow, far from all Mens sight:
From her fair Head her Fillet she undight
And laid her Stole aside. Her Angel's Face,
As the great Eye of Heaven shined bright,
And made a Sun-shine in the shady place;

C. 3. S. VI.

Instead thereof he kiss'd her weary Feet,
And lick'd her lilly Hands with fauning Tongue,

C. 3. S. VIII.

Redounding Tears did choke th' end of her Plaint,
Which softly echoed from the neighbour Wood;

. . . . .
. . . . .

At last, in close Heart shutting up her Pain,
Arose the Virgin born of heavenly Brood,
And to her snowy Palfrey got again,

C. 3. S. IX.

The Lion would not leave her desolate,

. . . . .
. . . . .

From her fair Eyes he took Commaundement,
And ever by her Looks conceived her Intent.

C. 3. S. X.

Till that at length she found the trodden Grass,
In which the Track of People's Footing was,
Under the steep foot of a Mountain hore:
The same she follows, till at last she has
A Damsel spy'd, slow footing her before,
That on her shoulders sad a Pot of Water bore.

C. 3. S. XIII.

Where that old Woman day and night did pray
Upon her Beads devoutly penitent;
Nine hundred Pater-Nosters every day,
And thrice nine hundred Ave's she was wont to say.

C. 3. S. XIV.

And to augment her painful Penance more,
Thrice every Week in Ashes she did sit,
And next her wrinkled Skin rough Sackcloth wore,
And thrice three times did fast from any bit:
But now for fear her Beads she did forget.
Whose needless dread for to remove away,
Fair Una framed Words and Count'nance fit:
Which hardly done, at length she 'gan them pray,

C. 3. S. XV.

The day is spent, and cometh drowsy Night,
When every Creature shrouded is in sleep;
Sad Una down her lays in weary plight,
And at her feet the Lion watch doth keep:
Instead of Rest, she does lament, and weep
For the late Loss of her dear loved Knight,
And sighs and groans, and evermore does steep
Her tender Breast in bitter Tears all Night;

C. 3. S. XVI.

Now when Aldeboran was mounted high
Above the shiny Cassiopeia's Chair,
And all in deadly sleep did drowned lie,
One knocked at the Door, and in would fare;
He knocked fast, and often curs'd, and sware,
That ready Entrance was not at his call:
For on his Back a heavy Load he bare
Of nightly Stealths, and Pillage several,

C. 3. S. XVII.

Then he by cunning sleights in at the Window crept.

C. 3. S. XIX.

And entring is; when that disdainful Beast
Encountring fierce, him suddain doth surprize,
And seizing cruel Claws on trembling Breast
Under his Lordly Foot him proudly hath supprest.

C. 3. S. XXI.

With Pains far passing that long wandring Greek,
That for his Love refused Deity;

C. 3. S. XXV.

... he forward 'gan advaunce
His fair enchaunted Steed, and eke his charmed Launce.

C. 3. S. XXV.

Ere long he came where Una travel'd slow,
And that wild Champion waiting her beside:

C. 3. S. XXX.

His lovely words her seem'd due Recompence
Of all her passed Pains: one loving Hour
For many Years of Sorrow can dispense;
A Dram of Sweet is worth a Pound of Sour:
She has forgot, how many a woful stower
For him she late endur'd;

C. 3. S. XXXI.

Much like, as when the beaten Mariner,
That long hath wandred in the Ocean wide,
Oft soust in swelling Thetis' saltish Tear,
And long time having tann'd his tawny Hide
With blustring Breath of Heaven, that none can bide,
And scorching Flames of fierce Orion's hound;
Soon as the Port from far he hath espy'd,
His cheerful Whistle merrily doth sound,
And Nereus crowns with Cups; his Mates him pledge around:

C. 3. S. XXXII.

Such Joy made Una, when her Knight she found;
And eke th' Enchaunter joyous seem'd no less
Than the glad Merchant, that does view from ground
His Ship far come from watry Wilderness;
He hurls out Vows, and Neptune oft doth bless:

C. 3. S. XXXIII.

And the sharp Iron did for Anger eat,
When his hot Rider spur'd his chauffed Side;

C. 3. S. XXXIX.

... but in a Traunce still lay,
And on those guileful dazed Eyes of his
The Cloud of Death did sit.

C. 3. S. XLII.

Eftsoons he pierced through his chauffed Chest
With thrilling Point of deadly Iron Band,
And launc'd his Lordly Heart;

C. 3. S. XLIV.

And all the way, with great lamenting Pain,
And piteous Plaints she filleth his dull Ears,
That stony Heart could riven have in twain,

C. 4. S. XVI.

As fair Aurora in her purple Pall,

C. 4. S. XVII.

Great Juno's golden Chair, the which they say
The Gods stand gazing on, when she does ride
To Jove's high House through Heavens brass-paved way,
Drawn of fair Peacocks, that excel in Pride,
And full of Argus' Eyes their Tails dispredden wide.

C. 4. S. XVIII.

Was sluggish Idleness, the Nurse of Sin;
Upon a slothful Ass he chose to ride,
Array'd in Habit black, and amis thin,
Like to an holy Monk, the Service to begin.

C. 4. S. XIX.

And in his hand his Portress still he bare,
That much was worn, but therein little red:
For of Devotion he had little care,
Still drown'd in Sleep, and most of his days dead;
Scarce could he once uphold his heavy Head,
To looken whether it were Night or Day.
May seem the Wain was very evil led,
When such an one had guiding of the way,

C. 4. S. XXII.

In green Vine Leaves he was right fitly clad,
For other Clothes he could not wear for Heat;
And on his Head an Ivy Garland had,
From under which fast trickled down the Sweat:
Still as he rode, he some-what still did eat,
And in his Hand did bear a Bouzing-Can,
Of which he supt so oft, that on his Seat
His drunken Corse he scarce upholden can;
In Shape and Life, more like a Monster than a Man.

C. 4. S. XXIII.

Full of Diseases was his Carcass blue,
And a dry Dropsy through his Flesh did flow;
Which by mis-diet daily greater grew:
Such one was Gluttony, the second of that Crew.

C. 4. S. XXIV.

And next to him rode lustful Lechery
Upon a bearded Goat, whose rugged Hair
And whally Eyes (the sign of Jealousy)
Was like the Person self, whom he did bear:
Who rough, and black, and filthy did appear,
Unseemly Man to please fair Ladies Eye;
Yet he, of Ladies oft was loved dear,
When fairer faces were bid standen by:
O! who does know the bent of Womens fantasy?

C. 4. S. XXV.

In a green Gown he clothed was full fair,
Which underneath did hide his Filthiness,
And in his Hand a burning Heart he bare,
Full of vain Follies and new-fangleness:
For, he was false, and fraught with Fickleness,
And learned had to love with secret Looks,
And well could daunce and sing with ruefulness,
And Fortunes tell, and read in loving Books,
And thousand other ways to bait his fleshly Hooks.

C. 4. S. XXVII.

And greedy Avarice by him did ride,
Upon a Camel loaden all with Gold;
Two iron Coffers hung on either side,
With precious Metal, full as they might hold,
And in his Lap an heap of Coin he told:
For of his wicked Pelf his God he made,
And unto Hell himself for Money sold;
Accursed Usury was all his Trade,
And right and wrong ylike in equal Ballance weigh'd.

C. 4. S. XXVIII.

His Life was nigh unto Death's Door yplac'd,
And thread-bare Coat and cobled Shoes he ware,
Ne scarce good morsel all his Life did taste,
But both from Back and Belly still did spare,
To fill his Bags, and Riches to compare:

C. 4. S. XXX.

And next to him malicious Envy rode
Upon a ravenous Wolf, and still did chaw
Between his cankred Teeth a venemous Tode,
That all the Poison ran about his Jaw;
But inwardly he chawed his own Maw
At Neighbour's Wealth, that made him ever sad;
For Death it was, when any good he saw,
And wept, that cause of Weeping none he had:
But when he heard of Harm, he wexed wondrous glad.

C. 4. S. XXXI.

All in a Kirtle of discolour'd Say
He clothed was, ypainted full of Eyes;

C. 4. S. XXXIII.

And him besides rides fierce revenging Wrath,
Upon a Lion, loth for to be led;
And in his Hand a burning Brond he hath,
The which he brandesheth about his Head;
His Eyes did hurle forth Sparkles fiery red,
And stared stern on all that him beheld,
As Ashes pale of hew and seeming dead;
And on his Dagger still his Hand he held;

C. 4. S. XXXIV.

His ruffin Rayment all was stain'd with Blood
Which he had spilt, and all to Rags yrent,
Through unadvised Rashness woxen wood;
For of his Hands he had no government,
Ne car'd for Blood in his avengement:
But when the furious Fit was overpast,
His cruel Facts he often would repent;
Yet wilful Man he never would forecast,

C. 4. S. XXXV.

The swelling Spleen, the Phrenzy raging rife,
The shaking Palsey, and Saint Francis' Fire:
Such one was Wrath, the last of this ungodly Tire.

C. 4. S. XXXVI.

And after all, upon the Waggon Beam
Rode Satan, with a smarting Whip in hand,
With which he forward lash'd the lazy Team,
So oft as Sloth still in the Mire did stand.
Huge Routs of People did about them band,

C. 4. S. XXXVII.

So forth they marchen in this goodly sort,
To take the solace of the open Air,
And in fresh flowring Fields themselves to sport.
Emongst the rest rode that false Lady fair,
The foul Duessa,

C. 4. S. XXXVIII.

With pleasaunce of the breathing Fields yfed,

C. 5. S. I.

The noble Heart, that harbours vertuous Thought,
And is with child of glorious great Intent,
Can never rest, until it forth have brought
Th' eternal Brood of Glory excellent:

C. 5. S. II.

At last, the golden Oriental Gate
Of greatest Heaven 'gan to open fair,
And Phœbus fresh, as Bridegroom to his Mate,
Came dauncing forth, shaking his dewy Hair:

And hurles his glistring Beams through gloomy Air.
Which when the wakeful Elfe perceiv'd, straightway
He started up, and did himself prepare,
In Sun-bright Arms, and battailous array:
For with that Pagan proud he combat will that day.

C. 5. S. III.

There many Minstrels maken Melody,
To drive away the dull Melancholy,
And many Bards, that to the trembling Chord
Can tune their timely Voices cunningly,
And many Chroniclers that can record
Old Loves, and Wars for Ladies doen by many a Lord,

C. 5. S. IV.

Soon after comes the cruel Sarazin,
In woven mail all armed warily,
And sternly looks at him,

. . . . .
. . . . .

They bring them Wines of Greece, and Araby,
And dainty Spices fetch'd from furthest Ind,'

C. 5. S. V.

She is ybrought unto a paled Green,

C. 5. S. VI.

A shrilling Trumpet sounded from on high,

C. 5. S. VIII.

So th' one for Wrong, the other strives for Right:
As when a Griffon, seized of his Prey,
A Dragon fierce encountreth in his Flight,
Through widest Air making his ydle way,
That would his rightful Ravine rend away:
With hideous Horror both together smite,
And souce so sore that they the Heavens affray.

C. 5. S. XVI.

Greatly advancing his gay Chevalry.

C. 5. S. XVII.

In Wine and Oil they washen his wounds wide,
And softly 'gan embalm on every side.
And all the while, most heavenly Melody
About the Bed sweet Music did divide,
Him to beguile of Grief and Agony:
And all the while Duessa wept full bitterly.

C. 5. S. XVIII.

As when a weary Traveller, that strays
By muddy Shore of broad seven-mouthed Nile,
Unweeting of the perilous wandring ways,
Doth meet a cruel crafty Crocodile,
Which in false Grief hiding his harmful Guile,
Doth weep full sore, and sheddeth tender Tears:

C. 5. S. XX.

Before the Door her iron Chariot stood,
Already harnessed for Journy new;
And cole-black Steeds yborn of hellish Brood,
That on their rusty Bits did champ, as they were wood.

C. 5. S. XXI.

She greatly grew amazed at the sight,
And th' unacquainted Light began to fear:
(For never did such Brightness there appear)
And would have back retired to her Cave,
Until the Witch's Speech she 'gan to hear,

C. 5. S. XXII.

Or that great House of Gods Celestial,
Which wast begot in Dæmogorgon's Hall,
And saw'st the Secrets of the World unmade;

C. 5. S. XXIV.

Her feeling Speeches some Compassion mov'd
In Heart, and Change in that great Mother's Face;

C. 5. S. XXVII.

Then bowing down her aged Back, she kist
The wicked Witch;

C. 5. S. XXVIII.

Then to her iron Waggon she betakes,
And with her bears the foul well-favour'd Witch:
Through mirksome Air her ready way she makes.
Her twyfold Teme (of which, two black as Pitch,
And two were brown, yet each to each unlich)
Did softly swim away, ne ever stamp,
Unless she chaunc'd their stubborn Mouths to twitch;
Then, foaming Tarre, their Bridles they would champ,
And trampling the fine Element, would fiercely ramp.

C. 5. S. XXIX.

His cruel Wounds, with cruddy Blood congeal'd,
They binden up so wisely as they may,
And handle softly, till they can be heal'd:
So lay him in her Chariot, close in Night conceal'd.

C. 5. S. XXX.

And all the while she stood upon the Ground,
The wakeful Dogs did never cease to bay,
As giving warning of th' unwonted Sound,
With which her iron Wheels did them affray,
And her dark griesly Look them much dismay.
The Messenger of Death, the ghastly Owl,
With dreary Shrieks did her also bewray;
And hungry Wolves continually did howl
At her abhorred Face, so filthy and so foul.

C. 5. S. XXXI. Thence turning back in silence soft they stole,
And brought the heavy Corse with easy pace

C. 5. S. XXXII. By that same way the direful Dames do drive
Their mournful Chariot,

. . . . .

. . . . .

The trembling Ghosts with sad amazed Mood,
Chattring their Iron Teeth, and staring wide
With stony Eyes; and all the hellish Brood
Of Fiends infernal flock'd on every side,
To gaze on earthly Wight, that with the Night durst ride.

C. 5. S. XXXIII. They pass the bitter waves of Acheron,
Where many Souls sit wailing wofully,
And come to fiery Flood of Phlegeton,

C. 5. S. XXXIV. Before the Threshold, dreadful Cerberus
His three deformed Heads did lay along,
Curled with thousand Adders venemous,
And lilled forth his bloody flaming Tongue:
At them he 'gan to rear his Bristles strong,
And felly gnarre, until Day's Enemy
Did him appease; then down his Tail he hong,

C. 5. S. XXXVI. Where was a Cave ywrought by wondrous Art,
Deep, dark, uneasy, doleful, comfortless,

C. 5. S. XLI. There antient Night arriving, did alight
From her high weary Wain,

C. 5. S. XLIX. Proud Tarquin, and too lordly Lentulus,
Stout Scipio, and stubborn Hannibal,
Ambitious Sylla, and stern Marius,
High Cesar, great Pompey, and fierce Antonius.

C. 5. S. LII. He by a privy Postern took his Flight,

C. 6. S. I. As when a Ship, that flies fair under Sail,
An hidden Rock escaped hath unwares,
That lay in wait her Wrack for to bewail,
The Mariner yet half amazed stares
At peril past, and yet it doubt ne dares
To joy at his fool-happy Oversight:
So doubly is distress'd 'twixt Joy and Cares
The dreadless Courage of this Elfin Knight,

C. 6. S. VII.

A Troop of Fauns and Satyrs far away
Within the Wood were dauncing in a Round,
Whiles old Sylvanus slept in shady Arbour sound:

C. 6. S. IX.

With ruffled Raiments, and fair blubbred Face,

C. 6. S. XI.

Their frowning Foreheads with rough Horns yclad,
And rustick Horror all aside do lay,
And gently grenning, shew a semblance glad
To comfort her, and Fear to put away,
Their backward bent Knees teach her humbly to obey.

C. 6. S. XIII.

They all, as glad as Birds of joyous Prime,
Thence lead her forth, about her dauncing round,
Shouting, and singing all a Shepherds Rime,
And with green Branches strowing all the Ground,
Do worship her, as Queen, with Olive Garland crown'd.

C. 6. S. XIV.

And all the way their merry Pipes they sound,
That all the Woods with double Echo ring,
And with their horned Feet do wear the Ground,
Leaping like wanton Kids in pleasant Spring.
So towards old Sylvanus they her bring;
Who, with the Noise awaked, cometh out
To weet the Cause, his weak Steps governing,
And aged Limbs on Cypres stadle stout,
And with an Ivy Twine his Waste is girt about.

C. 6. S. XV.

Far off he wonders, what them makes so glad,
If Bacchus' merry Fruit they did invent,
Or Cybel's frantick Rites have made them mad:

C. 6. S. XVI.

The Wood-born People fall before her flat,
And worship her as Goddess of the Wood;
And old Sylvanus' self bethinks not, what
To think of Wight so fair, but gazing stood,

. . . . .

. . . . .

Sometimes Diana he her takes to be,
But misseth Bow, and Shafts, and Buskins to her Knee.

C. 6. S. XVII.

But pin'd away in Anguish and self-will'd Annoy.

C. 6. S. XVIII.

The woody Nymphs, fair Hamadryades,
Her to behold do thither run apace,
And all the Troop of light-foot Naiades

C. 6. S. XIX.

Glad of such Luck, the luckless lucky Maid
Did her content to please their feeble Eyes,
And long time with that salvage People stay'd,
To gather Breath in many Miseries.

C. 6. S. XXX.

Yet evermore it was his manner fair,
After long Labours and Adventures spent,
Unto those native Woods for to repair,
To see his Sire and Offspring auntient.

C. 6. S. XXXIII.

So, on a day, when Satyres all were gone
To do their Service to Sylvanus old,

C. 6. S. XXXV.

A silly Man, in simple Weeds forworn,
And soil'd with Dust of the long dryed way;
His Sandals were with toilsome Travel torn,
And Face all tann'd with scorching sunny Ray,
As he had travell'd many a Summer's Day,
Through boiling Sands of Araby and Ind';
And in his Hand a Jacob's Staff, to stay
His weary Limbs upon:

C. 6. S. XL.

Whereas that Pagan proud himself did rest,
In secret Shadow by a Fountain side:

C. 7. S. II.

... whereas he weary sate
To rest himself, foreby a Fountain side,

C. 7. S. III.

He feeds upon the cooling Shade, and bays
His sweaty Forehead in the breathing Wind,
Which through the trembling Leaves full gently plays,

C. 7. S. IV.

Unkindness past, they 'gan of Solace treat,
And bathe in pleasaunce of the joyous Shade,
Which shielded them against the boiling Heat,
And with green Boughs decking a gloomy Glade,
About the Fountain, like a Garland made;
Whose bubbling Wave did ever freshly well,
Ne ever would through fervent Summer fade:

C. 7. S. VI.

And lying down upon the sandy Grail,
Drunk of the Stream, as clear as crystal Glass:

. . . . .
. . . . .

Till crudled cold his Courage 'gan assail,
And cheerful Blood in Faintness chill did melt,
Which like a Fever-fit through all his Body swelt.

C. 7. S. VII.

Yet goodly court he made still to his Dame,
Pour'd out in Looseness on the grassy Ground,

C. 7. S. X.

... his stalking Steps are staid
Upon a snaggy Oak, which he had torn
Out of his Mother's Bowels,

C. 7. S. XI.

... he 'gan advaunce
With huge Force and insupportable Main,

C. 7. S. XIII.

... and fram'd by Furies Skill,
With windy Nitre and quick Sulphur fraught,
And ram'd with Bullet round,

. . . . .
. . . . .

Through smouldry Cloud of duskish stinking Smoke,

C. 7. S. XIX.

The woful Dwarf, which saw his Master's Fall,
Whiles he had keeping of his grasing Steed,
And valient Knight become a Caitive thrall,
When all was past, took up his forlorn Weed,
His mighty Armour, missing most at need;
His silver Shield, now idle maisterless;
His poinant Spear, that many made to bleed,
The rueful Monuments of Heaviness;
And with them all departs, to tell his great Distress.

C. 7. S. XXIV.

At last, when Life recover'd had the Rein,
And over-wrestled his strong Enemy,

C. 7. S. XXVIII.

She fed her Wound with fresh renewed Bale;
Long toss'd with Storms, and bet with bitter Wind,
High over Hills, and low adown the Dale,
She wandred many a Wood, and measur'd many a Vale.

C. 7. S. XXIX.

Like glauncing Light of Phoebus' brightest Ray;
From top to toe no place appeared bare,
That deadly dint of Steel endanger may:
Athwart his Breast a Bauldrick brave he ware,
That shin'd like twinkling Stars, with Stones most precious rare.

C. 7. S. XXX.

Like Hesperus emongst the lesser Lights,

. . . . .
. . . . .

Thereby his mortal Blade full comely hong
In ivory Sheath, ycarv'd with curious slights;
Whose Hilts were burnish'd Gold, and Handle strong
Of mother Pearl, and buckled with a golden Tong.

C. 7. S. XXXI.

His haughty Helmet, horrid all with Gold,
Both glorious Brightness, and great Terror bred;
For all the Crest a Dragon did enfold
With greedy Paws, and over all did spread
His golden Wings: His dreadful hideous Head
Close couched on the Bever, seem'd to throw
From flaming Mouth bright Sparkles fiery red,
That suddain Horror to faint Hearts did show;
And scaly Tail was stretch'd adown his Back full low.

C. 7. S. XXXII.

Upon the top of all his lofty Crest,
A bunch of Hairs discolour'd diversly,
With sprinkled Pearl, and Gold full richly dress'd,
Did shake, and seem'd to daunce for Jollity,
Like to an Almond-Tree ymounted high
On top of green Selinis all alone,
With Blossoms brave bedecked daintily;
Whose tender Locks do tremble every one
At every little Breath, that under Heaven is blown.

C. 7. S. XXXVII.

His Spear of Heben Wood behind him bare,
Whose harmful Head, thrice heated in the Fire,
Had riven many a Breast with Picke-head square;

. . . . .
. . . . .

The iron Rowels into frothy Fome he bit.

C. 7. S. XXXVIII.

When as this Knight nigh to the Lady drew,
With lovely court he 'gan her entertain;
But when he heard her answers loth, he knew
Some secret Sorrow did her Heart distrain:
Which to allay, and calm her storming Pain,
Fair feeling words he wisely 'gan display,
And for her Humour fitting purpose feign,
To tempt the Cause it self for to bewray;
Wherewith emmov'd, these bleeding words she 'gan to say:

C. 7. S. XXXIX.

The careful Cold beginneth for to creep,
And in my Heart his iron Arrow steep,

C. 7. S. XLIII.

Which Phison and Euphrates floweth by,
And Gebon's golden Waves do wash continually:

C. 7. S. XLIV.

Bred in the loathly Lakes of Tartary,

C. 7. S. XLVIII.

And ye the forlorn Reliques of his Power,
His biting Sword and his devouring Spear,
Which have endured many a dreadful Stower,
Can speak his Prowess, that did earst you bear,
And well could rule:

C. 8. S. III.

Then took the Squire an Horn of Bugle small,
Which hung adown his side in twisted Gold,
And Tassels gay.

C. 8. S. IV.

Three Miles it might be easy heard around,
And Echoes three answer'd it self again:

C. 8. S. V.

In haste came rushing forth from inner Bower,
With staring Count'nance stern, as one astoun'd,
And staggering Steps, to weet what suddain Stower
Had wrought that Horror strange, and dar'd his dreaded Power.

C. 8. S. VII.

All arm'd with ragged Snubs and knotty Grain,

C. 8. S. IX.

Enroll'd in Flames, and smouldring Dreariment,

C. 8. S. XVII.

Thereat he roared for exceeding Pain,
That to have heard, great Horror would have bred;
And scourging th' empty Air with his long Train,
Through great Impatience of his grieved Head,

. . . . . .

Came hurtling in full fierce, and forc'd the Knight retire.

C. 8. S. XXI.

... For he has read his end
In that bright Shield,

C. 8. S. XXVII.

And you fresh Bud of Vertue springing fast,

C. 8. S. XXIX.

But no Man car'd to answer to his Cry.
There reign'd a solemn silence over all,
No Voice was heard, nor Wight was seen in Bower or Hall.

C. 8. S. XXX.

At last, with creeping crooked Pace forth came
An old old Man, with Beard as white as Snow,
That on a Staff his feeble Steps did frame,
And guide his weary Gate both to and fro;
For his Eye-sight him failed long ygo:
And on his Arm a Bunch of Keys he bore,
The which unused Rust did overgrow;
Those were the Keys of every inner Door,
But he could not them use, but kept them still in store.

C. 8. S. XXXI.

For as he forward mov'd his footing old,
So backward still was turn'd his wrinkled Face:

C. 8. S. XXXII. His reverent Hairs and holy Gravity

C. 8. S. XXXVII. But in the same a little Grate was pight,
Through which he sent his Voice, and loud did call
With all his Power, to weet if living Wight
Were housed there within, whom he enlargen might.

C. 8. S. XL. Whose feeble Thighs, unable to uphold
His pined Corse,

C. 8. S. XLI. His sad dull Eyes deep sunk in hollow Pits,
Could not endure th' unwonted Sun to view:
. . . . .
His rawbone Arms, whose mighty brawned Bowers

C. 9. S. I. O Goodly golden Chain, wherewith yfere
The Vertues linked are in lovely wise;

C. 9. S. IV. His dwelling is low in a Valley green,
Under the foot of Rauran mossie hore,
From whence the River Dee, as Silver clean,
His tumbling Billows rolls with gentle rore:

C. 9. S. VIII. Ah, Love, lay down thy Bow, the whiles I may respire.

C. 9. S. XII. Of looser Life, and Heat of Hardiment,
Ranging the Forest wide on Courser free,
The Fields, the Floods, the Heavens with one Consent
Did seem to laugh on me, and favour mine intent.

C. 9. S. XIII. The verdant Grass my Couch did goodly dight,
And Pillow was my Helmet fair display'd:

C. 9. S. XV. When I awoke, and found her place devoid,
And naught but pressed Grass where she had lyen,
I sorrowed all so much, as earst I joy'd,
And washed all her place with watry Eyne.

C. 9. S. XXI. And with his winged Heels did tread the Wind,
As he had been a Foal of Pegasus his kind.

C. 9. S. XXXI. His subtle Tongue, like dropping Honey, melt'th
Into the Heart, and searcheth every Vein,
That ere one be aware, by secret Stealth
His Power is reft, and Weakness doth remain.

C. 9. S. XXXIII.

Ere long they come, where that same wicked Wight
His dwelling has, low in a hollow Cave,
Far underneath a craggy Clift ypight,
Dark, doleful, dreary, like a greedy Grave,
That still for carrion Carcasses doth crave:
On top whereof ay dwelt the ghastly Owl,
Shrieking his baleful Note, which ever drave
Far from that haunt all other chearful Fowl;
And all about it wandring Ghosts did wail and howl.

C. 9. S. XXXIV.

And all about, old Stocks and Stubs of Trees,
Whereon nor Fruit, nor Leaf was ever seen,
Did hang upon the ragged rocky Knees;
On which had many Wretches hanged been,
Whose Carcasses were scattered on the Green,

C. 9. S. XXXV.

That darksom Cave they enter, where they find
That cursed Man, low sitting on the ground,
Musing full sadly in his sullen Mind;
His greazy Locks, long growen, and unbound,
Disordred hung about his Shoulders round,
And hid his Face; through which his hollow Eyne
Look'd deadly dull, and stared as astoun'd;
His raw-bone Cheeks, through Penury and Pine,
Were shrunk into his Jaws, as he did never dine.

C. 9. S. XXXVI.

His Garment, naught but many ragged Clouts,
With Thorns together pinn'd and patched was,
The which his naked Sides he wrap'd abouts;
And him beside there lay upon the Grass
A dreary Corse, whose Life away did pass,
All wallow'd in his own yet luke-warm Blood,

C. 9. S. XL.

. . . lays the Soul to sleep in quiet Grave?

C. 9. S. LI.

But when as none of them he saw him take,
He to him raught a Dagger sharp and keen,
And gave it him in hand: his Hand did quake,
And tremble like a Leaf of Aspin green,
And troubled Blood through his pale Face was seen
To come and go; with Tydings from the Heart,
As it a running Messenger had been.

C. 10. S. V.

With Looks full lowly cast, and Gate full slow,
Wont on a Staff his feeble Steps to stay,

C. 10. S. VI.

Each goodly thing is hardest to begin:
But entred in, a spacious Court they see,
Both plain and pleasant to be walked in,
Where them does meet a Franklin fair and free,
And entertains with comely courteous Glee;

C. 10. S. VII.

There fairly them receives a gentle Squire,
Of mild Demeanure, and rare Courtesy,
Right cleanly clad in comely sad Attire;
In Word and Deed that shew'd great Modesty,
And knew his Good to all of each degree,
Hight Reverence. He them with Speeches meet
Does fair entreat; no courting Nicety,
But simple, true, and eke unfeigned sweet,

C. 10. S. XII.

Thus as they 'gan of sundry things devise,
Lo! two most goodly Virgins came in place,
Ylinked arm in arm in lovely wise,
With Countenance demure, and modest Grace,
They numbred even Steps, and equal Pace:
Of which the eldest, that Fidelia hight,
Like sunny Beams threw from her crystal Face,
That could have daz'd the rash Beholder's Sight,

C. 10. S. XIII.

She was arrayed all in lilly White,
And in her right Hand bore a Cup of Gold,
With Wine and Water fill'd up to the height,
In which a Serpent did himself enfold,
That Horrour made to all that did behold;
But she no whit did change her constant Mood:
And in her other Hand she fast did hold
A Book, that was both sign'd and seal'd with Blood,

C. 10. S. XIV.

Upon her Arm a silver Anchor lay,
Whereon she leaned ever, as befel;
And ever up to Heav'n, as she did pray,
Her steadfast Eyes were bent, ne swerved other way.

C. 10. S. XV.

Then to the Knight, with shamefac'd Modesty,
They turn themselves, at Una's meek Request,
And him salute with well-beseeming Glee;
Who fair them quites, as him beseemed best,
And goodly can discourse of many a noble Gest.

C. 10. S. XXXI.

Adorn'd with Gems and Owches wondrous fair,
Whose passing Price uneath was to be told;
And by her side there sate a gentle Pair
Of turtle Doves, she sitting in an Ivory Chair.

C. 10. S. XXXIX.

The Plumes of Pride, and Wings of Vanity,

C. 10. S. XLVI.

On top whereof, a sacred Chappel was,
And eke a little Hermitage thereby,
Wherein an aged holy man did lie,

C. 10. S. XLVII.

Great Grace that old Man to him given had;
For God he often saw from Heaven's height.
All were his earthly Eyen both blunt and bad,
And through great Age had lost their kindly Sight,
Yet wondrous quick and pierceant was his Spright,
As Eagle's Eye, that can behold the Sun.

× Milton [Written in Keats's handwriting.]

C. 10. S. XLVIII.

With snowy Locks adown his Shoulders shed,
As hoary Frost with Spangles doth attire
The mossy Branches of an Oak half dead.

C. 10. S. LIII.

That blood-red Billows like a walled Front
On either side disparted with his Rod,
Till that his Army dry-foot through them yod,
Dwelt forty Days upon; where, writ in Stone
With bloody Letters by the Hand of God,
The bitter Doom of Death and baleful Moan
He did receive, whiles flashing Fire about him shone.

C. 10. S. LIV.

Or like that sacred Hill, whose head full high,
Adorn'd with fruitful Olives all around,
Is, as it were for endless Memory
Of that dear Lord, who oft thereon was found,
For ever with a flowring Garland crown'd:
Or like that pleasant Mount, that is for ay
Through famous Poets Verse each where renown'd,
On which the thrice three learned Ladies play
Their heavenly Notes, and make full many a lovely Lay.

C. 10. S. LV.

Cannot desc ibe, nor wit of Man can tell;
Too high a Ditty for my simple song:
The City of the great King hight it well,

C. 10. S. LXI.

Saint George of Merry England, the sign of Victory. !

C. 11. S. I.

And in her modest manner thus bespake;

C. 11. S. IV.

Where stretch'd he lay upon the sunny side
Of a great Hill, himself like a great Hill.

C. 11. S. V.

The Nurse of Time, and everlasting Fame,

C. 11. S. VI.

O gently come into my feeble Breast,
Come gently, but not with that mighty Rage,
Where-with the Martial Troops thou dost infest,
And Hearts of great Heroes doth enrage,
That naught their Kindled Courage may assuage;

Soon as thy dreadful Trump begins to sound,
The God of War with his fierce Equipage
Thou dost awake, sleep never he so sound,

C. II. S. VII.

Fair Goddess lay that furious Fit aside,
Till I of Wars and bloody Mars do sing,
And Briton Fields with Sarazin Blood bedy'd,
Twixt that great Fairy-Queen and Paynim King,
That with their horror Heaven and Earth did ring,
A work of labour long, and endles praise:
But, now a while let down that haughty String,

C. II. S. VIII.

By this, the dreadful Beast drew nigh to hand,
Half flying, and half footing in his haste,
That with his largeness measured much Land,
And made wide Shadow under his huge Waste;
As Mountain doth the Valley over-cast.
Approaching nigh, he reared high afore
His Body monstrous, horrible, and vast,
Which (to increase his wondrous Greatness more)
Was Swoln with Wrath, and Poison, and with bloody Gore.

C. II. S. IX.

Which as an Eagle, seeing Prey appear,
His airy Plumes doth rouze, full rudely dight,
So shaked he, that Horror was to hear:
For, as the clashing of an Armour bright,
Such noise his rouzed Scales did send unto the Knight.

C. II. S. X.

His flaggy Wings when forth he did display,
Were like two Sails, in which the hollow Wind
Is gathered full, and worketh speedy way:

C. II. S. XI.

His huge long Tail, wound up in hundred Folds,
Does over-spread his long Brass-scaly Back;
Whose wreathed Boughts when ever he unfolds,
And thick entangled Knots adown does slack;
Bespotted all with Shields of red and black,
It sweepeth all the Land behind him far,

C. II. S. XIII.

And that more wondrous was, in either Jaw
Three ranks of iron Teeth enranged were,
In which, yet trickling Blood and Gobbets raw

C. II. S. XIV.

(His blazing Eyes)
As two broad Beacons, set in open Fields,
Send forth their Flames far off to every Shire,

. . . . .
. . . . .

But far within, as in a hollow Glade,
Those glaring Lamps were set, that made a dreadful Shade.

C. II. S. XV.

So dreadfully he towards him did pass,
Forelifting up aloft his speckled Breast,
And often bounding on the bruised Grass,
As for great joyance of his new-come Guest.
Eftsoons he 'gan advance his haughty Crest,
As chauffed Boar his Bristles doth uprear,
And shook his Scales to Battel ready drest;
That made the Red-cross Knight nigh quake for fear,

C. II. S. XVIII.

Then with his waving Wings displayed wide,
Himself up high he lifted from the ground,
And with strong Flight did forcibly divide
The yielding Air, which nigh too feeble found
Her flitting parts, and Element unsound,
To bear so great a weight: he cutting way
With his broad Sails, about him soared round;
At last, low stouping with unwieldy sway,
Snatch'd up both Horse and Man, to bear them quite away.

C. II. S. XIX.

Long he them bore above the subject Plain
So far as Yewen Bow a Shaft may send,

C. II. S. XXI.

The rolling Billows beat the ragged Shore,
As they the Earth would shoulder from her Seat;

C. II. S. XXIII.

His hideous Tail then hurled he about,
And there with all enwrapt the nimble Thighs
Of the froth-fomy Steed,

C. II. S. XXVIII.

Faint, weary, sore, emboyled, grieved, brent
With Heat, Toil, Wounds, Arms, Smart, and inward Fire.

C. II. S. XXXI.

Now 'gan the golden Phœbus for to steep
His fiery Face in Billows of the West,
And his faint Steeds water'd in Ocean deep,

C. II. S. XXXIV.

As Eagle fresh out of the Ocean Wave,
Where he hath left his Plumes all hoary grey,
And deck'd himself with Feathers youthly gay,
Like Eyas Hawk up mounts unto the Skies,
His newly budded Pinions to assay,
And marvels at himself, still as he flies:

C. 11. S. LI.

Her golden Locks for haste were loosely shed
About her Ears, when Una her did mark
Climb to her Charet, all with flowers spred;
From Heaven high, to chace the chearless Dark,

C. 11. S. LIV.

So down he fell, and forth his Life did breathe,
That vanish'd into Smoak and Cloudes swift;
So down he fell, that th' Earth him underneath
Did groan, as feeble so great Load to lift;
So down he fell, as an huge rocky Clift,
Whose false Foundation Waves have wash'd away,
With dreadful Poise is from the main Land rift,
And rolling down, great Neptune doth dismay;
So down he fell, and like an heaped Mountain lay.

C. 12. S. I.

Behold, I see the Haven nigh at hand,
To which I mean my weary Course to bend;
Vere the main Shete, and bear up with the Land,
The which afore is fairly to be kend,
And seemeth safe from Storms, that may offend:
There this fair Virgin, weary of her way,
Must landed be, now at her Journey's end;
There eke my feeble Bark awhile may stay,
Till merry Wind and Weather call her thence away.

C. 12. S. II.

Scarcely had Phœbus, in the glooming East,
Yet harnessed his fiery-footed Teem,

C. 12. S. III.

Up rose with hasty Joy, and feeble Speed
That aged Sire,

C. 12. S. V.

Forth came that ancient Lord and aged Queen,
Array'd in antique Robes down to the Ground,
And sad Habiliments right well beseen;

C. 12. S. VI.

And in their Hands sweet Tymbrels all upheld on hight.

C. 12. S. VII.

As fair Diana, in fresh Summer's Day,
Beholds her Nymphs, enrang'd in shady Wood,
Some wrestle, some do run, some bathe in crystal Flood:

C. 12. S. VIII.

Then on her Head they set a Girland green,
And crowned her 'twixt Earnest and 'twixt Game;

C. 12. S. X.

Or in his Womb might lurk some hidden Nest
Of many Dragonets, his fruitful Seed:

C. 12. S. XI.

One Mother, when as her fool-hardy Child
Did come too near, and with his Talants play,

Half dead through fear, her little Babe revil'd,
And to her Gossips gan in counsel say;

C. 12. S. XIII. With Shaumes, and Trumpets, and with Clarions sweet;

C. 12. S. XVI. That godly King and Queen did passionate,

C. 12. S. XXII. So fair and fresh, as freshest Flower in May;
For she had laid her mournful Stole aside,
And, Widow-like sad Wimple thrown away,

C. 12. S. XXXVIII. Then 'gan they sprinkle all the Posts with Wine,
And made great Feast, to solemnize that Day;
They all perfum'd with Frankincense Divine,
And precious Odours fetch'd from far away,
That all the House did sweat with great Array:
And all the while sweet Music did apply
Her curious Skill, the warbling Notes to play,
To drive away the dull Melancholy;

C. 12. S. XXXIX. During the which there was an heavenly Noise
Heard sound through all the Palace pleasantly,
Like as it had been many an Angel's Voice,
Singing before th' eternal Majesty,
In their trinal Triplicities on high;
Yet wist no Creature, whence that heavenly Sweet
Proceeded:

C. 12. S. XLII. Now strike your Sails, ye jolly Mariners;
For we be come unto a quiet Rode,
Where we must land some of our Passengers,
And light this weary Vessel of her Load.
Here she awhile may make her safe Abode,
Till she repaired have her Tackles spent,
And Wants supply'd. And then again abroad
On the long Voyage whereto she is bent;
Well may she speed, and fairly finish her Intent.

## A COPY OF THE *POEMS*, 1817, GIVEN BY KEATS TO HIS BROTHER GEORGE[1]

On the title-page is an inscription in Keats's handwriting: "From J. K. to his affectionate Brother George."

On page 17, in the *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem*, the word "knight" has three ink lines drawn through it and the word "steed" written above.

The marks and underscorings are all in *I stood Tip-toe Upon a Little Hill*. They were probably made by George, but undoubtedly represent the

[1] Author's Collection.

opinions of all three brothers. As in the *Fairy Queen*, these marks are copied exactly. Unmarked passages are preserved only when the continuity of the sense demands their inclusion.

p. 1.

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling, and so very still,
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scantly leaved, and finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost those starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves:

p. 2.

Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending;
Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.

p. 2–3.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them;
Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them;
And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them
Moist, cool and green; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

p. 3.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
Upon their summer thrones;

p. 3–4.

Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters
The spreading blue bells: it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds!
Dry up the moisture of your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses:
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

p. 4.

Here are sweet-peas, on tip-toe for a flight:

With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

p. 4. How silent comes the water round that bend;
Not the minutest whisper does it send

p. 5-6. Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
And cool themselves among the em'rald tresses;
The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery green may live:
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low hung branches; little space they stop;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak:
Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden wings,
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

p. 6. Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown
Fanning away the dandelion's down;
Than the light music of her nimble toes
Patting against the sorrel as she goes.

p. 6. And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne.

p. 7. Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
Coming into the blue with all her light.
O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight
Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers;
Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams,
Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,
Lover of loneliness, and wandering,
Of upcast eye, and tender pondering!

p. 8. In the calm grandeur of a sober line,
We see the waving of the mountain pine;

And when a tale is beautifully staid,
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade:
When it is moving on luxurious wings,
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings:
Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,
And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases;
O'er head we see the jasmine and sweet briar,
And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire;

p. 8–9.

What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips
First touch'd; what amorous, and fondling nips
They gave each other's cheeks; with all their sighs,
And how they kist each other's tremulous eyes;
The silver lamp, — the ravishment, — the wonder —
The darkness, — loneliness, — the fearful thunder;
Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown,
To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.

p. 9.

And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet,
Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet:
Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.
Poor nymph, — poor Pan, how he did weep to find,
Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind
Along the reedy stream; a half heard strain,
Full of sweet desolation — balmy pain.

p. 10.

In some delicious ramble, he had found
A little space, with boughs all woven round;
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool,
The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping.
And on the bank a lonely flower he spied,
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,
Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo its own sad image into nearness:
Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move;
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.
So while the Poet stood in this sweet spot,
Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot;
Nor was it long ere he had told the tale
Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

p. 11.

That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness,
Coming ever to bless
The wanderer by moonlight? to him bringing
Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing
From out the middle air, from flowery nests,

And from the pillowy silkiness that rests
Full in the speculation of the stars.

p. 11–12. He was a Poet, sure a lover too,
Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew
Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below;
And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow
A hymn from Dian's temple; while upswelling,
The incense went to her own starry dwelling.
But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,
Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,
The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,
Wept that such beauty should be desolate:
So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won,
And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

p. 12. Where distant ships do seem to show their keels,
Phoebus awhile delayed his mighty wheels.

p. 13. Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call,
Or young Apollo on the pedestal:
And lovely women were as fair and warm,
As Venus looking sideways in alarm.

p. 13–14. And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight;
Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,
And on their placid foreheads part the hair.
Young men and maidens at each other gaz'd
With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd
To see the brightness in each other's eyes;
And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise.
Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy.
Therefore no lover did of anguish die:
But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,
Made silken ties, that never may be broken.
Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses,
That follow'd thine, and thy dead shepherd's kisses:
Was there a Poet born? — but now no more,
My wand'ring spirit must no further soar. —

## THE ROGVE: OR, THE LIFE OF GUZMAN DE ALFARACHE.[1]

WRITTEN IN SPANISH BY MATEO ALEMAN.

THE THIRD EDITION CORRECTED. LONDON. 1634.

There are a number of Dedications at the beginning of the book. At the top of the page of the Dedication "To Don Francisco de Roias, Marquesse

[1] In possession of The Authors' Club, New York.

de Poza" is written in Rice's handwriting: "Purchased by me A. D. 1819 — and given to John Keats and upon his death 1821 — returned to me. Rice."

On the last page of another Dedication: "To the Vulgar," this passage in the text is marked: "the high moralities of diviner wits."

On the top margin of the first page of the book proper is written in Rice's handwriting:

"John Keats
From his Friend
Js Rxxx
20th April 1818."

The scorings in the text are given exactly as they appear in the book. Italicized words are so in the text and do not refer to Keats's marks, which are indicated by a line, the method he himself employed.

p. 3 | he drew admirable Land-skips, and other representations of things afarre of, as clouds in the Aire, streaks in the skie, and other fiery colours of the heavens, occasioned by the reflex of the Sun-setting beams, ruinated buildings, and other diversity of rare Architecture. And in the lower part, nearest to the ground, he had graced his worke with many fine Groves, dainty Flowres, greene Meddowes, and craggy Rockes.

p. 4 | when you intreat them to recite what they know in this, or that other thing: or to report what they have heard, or seene; or to tell you the truth and substance of a businesse, to prepare colours to slicke it over, and to paint and disguize it, that you can no more know the face of it, than the countenance of an old Hag, that is plaistred over with painting. Every one gives his shadowings after his owne fancy: one while amplifying; another while moving passion, sometimes disannulling, and sometimes diverting, as the humour takes him.

p. 4 *rapsodie* of things hudled one on the neck of another,

p. 4 | if it lay in our hands to make our owne choice (but beggers must be no choosers) out of that masse of *Adam*, and first lump of flesh, I would have scrambled hard for one of the best morsels, though I had beene forced to goe to Cuffes for it: But there is no helpe for that; Every man must be content with that which fals to his lot:

p. 5 | Many times he himselfe heard that reproachfull word as he past along the streets, it could not escape his eare, yet he was of that good nature, and gentle condition, that he tooke no notice of it, but slightly past it over.

p. 5 | When a man shall pray, frequent vertuous exercises, heare divine Service, confesse his sinnes, and often communicate; for men to say, that such a one is an Hypocrite, I can by no means indure it:

p. 8 | I did looke for this conclusion from thee; assuring my selfe before-

hand, that thou wouldst take them all to be old Wives tales, when they meet at the Bake-house to set their bread into the Oven.

p. 8–9 Here my Cart stickes fast, and is so clogg'd with durt and myre, and so surrounded and wedged in as it were, on every side with filth and mucke, that I know not in the world how to get it out, unlesse the Angell of God returne once againe to the fish-poole. I confesse (my Lords) that for these thirty yeeres and upwards, I have seene and heard the Confessions of many sinners; who having falne into one sinne, have falne againe many times into the sam. And yet all these, (by God's helpe, and his goodnesse and mercy towards them) have reformed both their lives and consciences, and become good livers, and have all put on amendment. The Wencher that hath lyen at racke and manger, and stood at continuall Livery, time, and a filthy Queane hath tam'd him. The Gamester, a master of a Dicing house, or Keeper of an Ordinary, makes him in the end to see his errour; who like a Horse-leech, goes from one to another sucking by little and little their blood from them. To day thou winnest, to morrow thou losest; the money runnes round, and still it remaineth; but they that play, I am sure remaine without it. The famousest Thiefe, feare and shame reformeth. The rash Railer, the Palsie, for which few escape. The proud man, his owne miserie doth dis-deceive him, being conscious to himselfe, that he is but durt. The Lyer, the ill language, and the affronts, which are daily cast in his teeth, put a bridle upon his tongue. The unadvised Blasphemer, the continuall reprehensions of his friends and kinsfolkes correct and amend him. All these, either early or late, at one time or another, reape some fruit, and cast off (like the Snake) their old skinne, although perhaps (within) they wring hard for it.

In all and every one of these have I found some markes, and signes of their salvation: Onely in the Scrivener, I misse in my account, and am quite out of my reckoning, nor doe I finde in him any amendment at all; but is just the same man to day, that he was yesterday; this yeere, as he was thirty yeeres since; for he is still one and the selfe-same man: Nor do I know to whom, or how he confesseth, nor who absolveth him: (I speake of him, who doth not faithfully exercise his Office) for they informe, and write downe that, which they thinke fit, and for two ducats, or to pleasure a friend, or to do a shee creature a courtesie (for your mantles, are great medlars, and your Women, not the worst solicitours).

p. 9 and for that the money that is put into the palmes of their hands, their fist being well greased therewith, is in an instant converted into flesh and bloud, and incorporated into one and the selfe-same substance with themselves; they have no more power to cast it off from them, than they have to shake of the World, or the devill, who sit so close unto them, that they can hardly be removed.

p. 9 then will he tell you that these are the rates of old, & that they take no more but their wonted fees, that victuals and other things grow

still dearer and dearer, & the meanes to maintaine them, worse and worse: That the Kings rents and prices are variable; that they had not their Offices for nothing, but payd soundly for them; and therefore must licke himselfe whole as well as he can,

p. 10 And after that they once grow warme in their places,

p. 10 There is not a pore or joynt in all his body, but is either a mouth to swallow, or a paw to take hold, if you once come within his clutches. Here he seaseth on Wheat, there on Barley; here Wine, there Oile, besides flitches of Bacon, cloathes both wollen and linnen, silkes of all sorts, Iewels, Money, from the Hangings in the dining Chamber, to stoope so low as the spice-box in the Kitchin; from the Masters bed, to the Mules cratch; from the purest Wheat in the granary; to the very Straw and Chaffe that lies at the Barnes doore, choosing rather to play at small game, than to sit out. From which terrible griping, and violent hold-fast, nothing can un-hitch them but deaths flesh-hooke. For, when the hand takes a bribe, and they once begin to be corrupted, there is no ho with them, they are marred for ever after by an evill use, and never come to be good. And so they receive with open hand all manner of bribes, as if they were men in pay, and what they wrongfully take, were true wages, and lawfull fees.

p. 10 So that they have two *Genii*, (as men for the more surety will have two strings to their Bow:) the Court *Genius*, which is the Protectour of their bodily goods, and Gods good Angell, that is, the Protectour of their soules.

p. 11 the *Chancery*, which is one of the famousest buildings (for its bignesse) that is in all Spaine; and whereunto (for not onely the curiousnesse of the Arches and Vaults, but for the faire carriage of businesse) there is not any in these times knowne to be equall unto it:

p. 11 But it would seeme somewhat strange, that a man should have a sentence goe on his side, that hath not wit to defend his cause. But my father found sentence in his favour, because he had beene beaten to those kinde of businesses, and knew the trace of them, and was well able to hold plea.

p. 13 [Of women's painting themselves.] And (which to see, is a thousand pitties) that your foule, and worst favoured women, are not onely those that doe this, but even your fairest, and those that are most beholding to Nature: ×

[Keats put a cross at the end of the line, as here, and wrote in the margin — the page has been cut and I have added probable words in brackets]: "the original ~~of the~~ sens[e] of the mos[t] beholding used as

indebted — na[ture] beholding nature th[at] is most fit [to] be beheld [by] the eye of na[ture].'

p. 14 | the cards once more were delt round againe, and he came into very good play.

p. 15 | Her handsome feature needs no other commender, than it self.

p. 15 | She was that Knights Pawne; his jewell, his delight, a morsell that he kept for his owne mouth, over whom he was wondrous wary,

p. 15 that their little Caskets may be stored with Boxes of Marmalet;

p. 15 | he did ever manifest his faith by his works, because they should not condemne it to be dead and fruitlesse.

p. 16 | faine shee would, but durst not; she had a good mind to the businesse, but yet she was afraid: she was sometimes on, sometimes off; her owne heart was the Oracle of her desires; with that she consulted often, what were best to doe. And thus disputing *pro* and *con* with herselfe, *ya lo zenia de la haz, ya delenues*. Sometimes (as we see in the handling of Stuffes, or of Cloth) she was on the right, sometimes on the wrong: one while she would put on a full resolution to doe thus and thus; by and by againe, she would turne to a new Conjugation, and vary the Mood she was in before.

p. 16 but her great wisedome, and long experience, which was hereditary unto her, and suckt from her mother's teat.

p. 16 | I am therein like unto the Candle, or the Sunne in its brightnesse, though I lend light unto others, I have nothing the lesse my selfe: I shall not want a whit in my estate, but be rather still at the full. Of whom I have received so many courtesies, so many gifts, it is fit, I should in some sort shew my selfe thankfull, and not be sparing to him, that hath beene so bountifull to me. Shall I be covetous, when he is so liberall? God forbid. I am now resolved what to do: I will sow my bagge at both ends, my jawes shall grind on both sides, my chaps shall walke every way; and the better to secure my shipp, I will have two anchors to one bottome; that if I should chance to lose the one, I might still have another remaining to serve my turne. And if the mansion-house should chance to fall, yet if the Dove-house hold up, if that stand fast, we shall lacke no Pigeons,

p. 17 | She feigned such extremities of torture, made such pittifull faces, and such wofull gestures (holding her hands as hard as she could for her life upon her belly, crushing and wringing it with all the might and maine she could:) then would she let them loose againe, then claspe them together, and wring each finger through anguish of her

pain: other-while she would hang the head, as if she were fainting and ready to swoune;

p. 18 Yet was shee a dissembling Hilding, a crafty old Carrion, one that had learned her lesson before-hand, and received her instructions from my father, so that shee was well prepared for the business. Besides, shee was no Dullard, and for such kinde of imployments she was no Baby, but understood very well in such services as these what was fit to be done.

And herein (amongst other things) the rich have this advantage of the poore, That evill servants will not so easily come to the becke and bend of a poore Master, as well-disposed servants will be over-awed by a rich Master, and wonne to his lewd commands. The poore man (though he be never so honest) yet must he yeeld sometimes to the violent disposition of his wilfull and head-strong servants; whereas honest Countrey Swaines, over commanded by their rich Land-lords, become Ministers to their lustfulnesse. So that the poore (though never so good) having ill servants, are servants to their servants. And the rich (though never so bad) by being served with good servants, are the onely men that are well served.

My good old woman had by this time opened the gate, and either not well remembring, or making show as if she had not knowne them.

p. 18 O what a griefe it is to see, that any pain should prove so unhappy, as to be thus ill imploy'd upon so sweet a face,

p. 19 (honest Cuckold as hee was).

p. 20 And with a bended brow and angry looke, casting her eye a-skew upon him with a coynesse of language, she turned a-side from him, accenting her words in a pretty kinde of mournfull fashion, pittying as it were and bemoaning her selfe;

p. 20 × his voice lowd and shrill, but not very cleere:

[Beside this line, Keats put an × in the margin, and at the bottom margin of the page wrote] "This puts me in mind of Fielding's Fanny 'whose teeth were white but uneven,' it is the same sort of personality. The great Man in this way is Chaucer."

p. 21 to assist there more, where it loves, than where it lives.

p. 21 The conversation went forward, Cards are call'd for, and to play they goe. Their game was *Primera* at three hands; my mother, shee got the money, for my father was willing to lose to her: and it beginning now to waxe night, they gave off play, and went out into the garden to take the ayre. In the meane while, the Cloth was layd, and their supper brought in, and set on the boord: they sit downe, then eate and have supp'd. And having given order against after supper, that a Barge should bee made ready for them, and

tricked up with fresh flagges, and green boughs: when they came to the water side, they tooke Boat, and were no sooner lanched foorth into the channell, but they might heare from other Vessels, which went too and fro upon the River, sundry Consorts of all sorts of Musicke, which made a most melodious sound; being an usuall ordinary thing with them, in such a place, and such a time

p. 22 an Easterling, dyed into a *Genouese*, and dipt in the Fat of Vsury, who knew well enough, how to put out his money to the best profit; who could cleare you any account could liquidate and divide it to an haire, how much losse there was in measure, from the wastings that arose from the winnowing, and cleansing of corn; how many graines lost in the refining of such a proportion or quantity of Metall; nay, he could tell you to a crumme, how much losse there was in an hundred dozen, between the bread that was broken with the hand, and that which was cut with the knife.

p. 22 . . . Shee ran thorow the whole course of her Art, and did all her Exercise for her degree of a Whore; which shee had laudably taken, by making her appointments between the two Quires, and the Naves, or Isles of the old Church.

p. 22 My mother, young, faire, and full of wit, and knew so well how to provoke his appetite upon all occasions, that his disorder opened the doore to his death: for the old Lad, by over-doing himselfe, hastened his owne end. First, his stomacke began to faile him, then he was taken with a paine in his head, after that followed a burning fever, which after some few fits began to leave him; but though that ceased, he had never a whit the more minde to his meate, he could eate nothing: so little by little he consumed away, and after some few pulls, he died. My mother not being able to restore him to life, though shee would ever sweare unto him, that shee was his life, and he hers: But all that protestation proved to bee but a lie; for he was buried, yet shee still lived.

p. 23 But my mother, as she churned the milke, so she was her owne carver; she was the Tayler to cut out her owne coat, and the worker of her owne fortune.

p. 23 And howbeit the Act were not lawfull, yet the Compact was justifiable. It was not lawfull for her to play the whore, yet might she by Law have whatever was promised her for the use of her body.

[Beside this, in the margin, Keats wrote] "A semi-paradox."

p. 23 Since by eating by ounces, and drinking by thimble-fuls, they live by drams;

p. 24 What a Saint *Iohn* the Evangelist am I become on the sudden, that I read you such a Lecture? The Oven grew hot, my zeale was kindled, and so these good flashes flew forth; you may the better par-

don this fault in me, because I have made you some amends in being so short. As it came in my fingers, I tooke it along with me; it came in my way, and I could not let it slippe: so shall I doe hereafter, as often as occasion is offered.

p. 24 For if thou be clad in a neat Sut of cloathes, and that they sit well upon thee, it is not materiall, whether thy Taylour were crooke-back't or no.

p. 24 I was betweene three and foure yeeres old: and by the recknings and rules of your feminine knowledge, I had two fathers: for my mother was so well learned in her Art, that she knew very well how to father me on them both. She had attained to the knowledge of working impossibilities, as plainely was to be seene, since she had the cunning to serve two Masters, and to please two husbands; to both of them giving good contentment. Both of them did acknowledge me to be their sonne; the one sayd, I was his; so did the other. And when the Knight was alone by himselfe, my mother would tel him, that I was as like him, as if I had beene spit out of his mouth & that two Egges were not liker one another, than I was like him. When againe, she talked with my father, she would tell him that I was his *alter ego*, that he and I were one, and so would have seemed, if our heads had beene cut off, and laid in a Charger: and that I was himselfe, made lesse; and did so truly resemble him, as if my head had stood upon his shoulders. But I wonder a God, in this resemblance of mine, (which a blind man might discerne at the first blush) that the mystery thereof was not discovered; that they found not out her craft,

p. 25 It is an old saying, that two is one; one, none; and three Roguery.

p. 25 × And it is much better for me this way, than that people should say; that I am ill borne and the son of no man.
[Beside this sentence, Keats put an ×.]

p. 25 For they knew no other name that shee had, save the Commendadora;

p. 25 and a foole understands more in his owne, than a wise man in another mans house.

p. 25 it is but a touch, and now we go on.

p. 26 My mother was a storer, a thrifty Wench, one on that could hold her owne; she was no waster but still lay on the saving hand:

p. 26 it was unto him like a peece of Weake, or Cotton in a Lampe, dipt in Oile; he began to give light afresh; he spent bravely, got him a Caroche, and a *Silla de manos*, a little chaire to carry with hands, borne with girthes upon mens shoulders, as well for ease as state. Not so much for any longing that my mother had thereunto, as for

his owne ostentation and glory, that the world might not take notice of the weaknesse of his Estate, or that he was going down the winde.

p. 27 And she would rather die and starve for hunger, than bate an Ace of her former height or faile one quilate in the touch or finenesse of her punctuality.

p. 27 my mother was her mothers owne daughter, and trode just in her steps; shee set her Samplar before her, that shee might draw out some good worke from thence, so that she went along in the very same path that shee did, save only in that of her child-bearing; for my Grandmother brought forth a daughter for her comfort.

p. 27 nay, to colour the busines the better, she would go a little farther in counterfetting markes and moles in the face, and other spots in other parts to that purpose; not wanting to tell some, that shee did spit like them, and that she had it naturally from them. She had this (as shee was excellent in many) cunning tricke with her, that when any of her sweet-hearts were present with her, she would call her after his Sir-name. And if two, or more were there at the same time, she called her barely by her owne name, without any addition. Her proper name was *Marcella*, which was burnished and furbished over with the title of *Don*, set over the head of it; for as she was called *Donna Marcella;* so had she her *Don* or *Cavellero* for her servant. For *Donna*, without *Don*, are lesse compatible, and lesse comely, than a house, without a bed; a Mill, without a wheele; or a body, without a shadow. As for her Sir-names, seeing they were things that meerely depended upon her mothers owne free choice and election; and for that she was uncertaine thereof, because she could not well tell who was the true father to her daughter: I must therefore give you to know, that she did bolster her up and under-prop her, with the best titular names shee could devise, throwing more noble houses upon her, than a king of *Arines* could conferre with all his farre-fetcht pedigrees. Which to repeat unto you, where to reckon up a Bead-roll of Genealogies, as long as any Letany, that is solemnly sung at divine service.

The *Guzmans* were those, unto whom she most inclined, (for she had a great liking to that name.)

p. 28 Or if, as I was the only sonne of my Mother, it had beene my good hap to have had a Sister, to have serv'd a prop to my Mother, as a staffe to her old age, as a piller to our poverty, and as a port to our often shiprackes, wee would have bid a figge in Fortunes teeth.

p. 29 I was a fat plumpe Lad, well fed, and cocker'd up, bred in *Sevill*, never checkt, chid, nor corrected by my Father: My Mother (as you have heard) a Widdow-woman, my selfe cramm'd with Collops of Bacon, your finest Bread, and your daintiest Creame; your sops of Honey steep't in Rose-water, more lookt on, and adored, than a Merchant of *Toledo*, or at least as good a man as he,

p. 31 | O good God, how did her stinking breath annoy me! with her very touching of me, me thought I had drawne old age upon me, the attraction was so sensible to my seeming.

p. 32 | For it is as proper to him that is hungry, not to stand upon Sauces, and your fine relishes; as to him that is in want, to step out into the highway, and to take a purse.

p. 35 | And even yet to this day, mee thinkes I heare those little chickens, those poore pretty fooles, cry still peepe, peepe, within my bowels.

p. 38 quicke and noble disposition,

p. 115 Cherries
[In margin opposite this word Keats wrote] "Fruits/Pars pro toto."

p. 235 There is a drawing on this page.

## *CHARACTERS OF SHAKESPEAR'S PLAYS*, BY WILLIAM HAZLITT.[1]

PUBLISHED FOR C. AND J. OLLIER. LONDON, 1817.

On the title-page, in Keats's handwriting: "John Keats." Also on the title-page, just below the author's name, Keats wrote and underlined:

"The mortal properties and scope of things
— he hath a kind of taste — somewhat grave to —"

In following Keats's underscorings and annotations in this volume, the passages of the text which Keats marked are printed in italics, double scorings have a line beneath the italicized text. Passages not in italics were not marked by Keats, and are only included where the sense of those marked would be obscure without them. Keats's marginal notes are printed in ordinary type, but preceded by the word "Note" in brackets, and indented; also, they are put between quotation marks.

p. 125. [Note at the end of the chapter on *The Tempest*] "I cannot help seeing Hazlitt like Ferdinand — 'in an odd angle of the Isle sitting — his arms in this sad knot.'"

The following passages are in the chapter on *King Lear*.

p. 153–154. *He was here fairly caught in the web of his own imagination. The passion which he has taken as his subject is that which strikes its root deepest into the human heart; of which the bond is the hardest to be unloosed; and the cancelling and tearing to pieces of which gives the greatest revulsion to the frame.* This depth of nature, this force of passion, this tug and war of the elements of *our being, this firm faith in filial piety, and the giddy anarchy and whirling tumult of the thoughts at finding this*

[1] Author's Collection.

*prop failing it, the contrast between the fixed, immovable basis of natural affection, and the rapid, irregular starts of imagination, suddenly wrenched from all its accustomed holds and resting-places in the soul, this is what Shakespear has given, and what nobody else but he could give.*

p. 154. [Lear's character] *It is his rash haste, his violent impetuosity, his blindness to everything but the dictates of his passions or affections, that produces all his misfortunes, that aggravates his impatience of them . . .*

p. 155. [Of Cordelia] . . . *the indiscreet simplicity of her love (which, to be sure, has a little of her father's obstinacy in it) . . .*

p. 157. [Of "the logic of passion" in *King Lear*] We see the ebb and flow of the feeling, its *pauses and feverish starts, its impatience of opposition, its accumulating force when it has time to recollect itself, the manner in which it avails itself of every passing word or gesture, its haste to repel insinuation, the alternate contraction and dilation of the soul.*

× [The cross indicates a Note at the bottom of the page] "This passage has to a great degree the hieroglyphic visioning." [1]

p. 158. [Of Lear's anguish as opposed to the cold cruelty of his older daughters] The contrast would be too painful, the shock too great, *but for the intervention of the Fool, whose well-timed levity comes in to break the continuity of feeling when it can no longer be borne, and to bring into play again the fibres of the heart just as they are growing rigid from overstrained excitement.*

× [The cross refers to a Note at the bottom of the page] "This is almost the last observation from Mr. Hazlitt. And is it really thus? Or as it has appeared to me! Does not the Fool by his very levity — give a finishing touch to the pathos; making what without him would be within our heart-reach nearly unfathomable. The Fool's words are merely the simplest translation of Poetry high as Lears.

'Since my young Ladies going into France
Sir, the Fool hath much pined away'"

p. 158. [This passage follows immediately upon the last] *The imagination is glad to take refuge in the half-comic, half-serious comments of the Fool, just as the mind under the extreme anguish of a surgical operation vents itself in sallies of wit.*

p. 158. [Of the Fool's character, and its use in the play] . . . it *carries pathos to the highest pitch of which* it is capable.

× [The Note to which this cross refers carries on the argument of the last Note] "Aye, this is it — most likely H. is right throughout. Yet is there not a little contradiction?"

p. 170. [After a quotation from the scene between Lear, Goneril, and Regan in Gloster's Castle] *If there is anything in any author like this yearning*

[1] See Vol. I, p. 382.

*of the heart, these throes of tenderness, this profound expression of all that can be thought and felt in the most heart-rending situations, we are glad of it; but it is in some author we have not read.*

p. 171. [After quoting various lines from *King Lear*] . . . are in a style of pathos, *where the extremest resources of the imagination are called in to lay open the deepest movements of the heart, which was peculiar to Shakespear.*

p. 171. *Indeed, the manner in which the threads of the story are woven together is almost as wonderful in the way of art as the carrying on the tide of passion.*

p. 175. *The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual; the explosions of his passions are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that rich sea, his mind, with all its vast riches.*

p. 176. *. . . we see not Lear, but we are Lear; . . . in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodised from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will on the corruptions and abuses of mankind.*

p. 176. Tate has put his hook in this *Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the shewmen of the scene, to draw it about more easily.*

p. 177. *As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station, — as if at his years and with his experience, any thing was left but to die.*

p. 177. [The following passage is triple scored.] Four things have struck us in reading LEAR:

1. *That poetry is an interesting study, for this reason, that it relates to whatever is most interesting in human life. Whoever therefore has a contempt for poetry, has a contempt for himself and humanity.*

p. 177. 2. *That the language of poetry is superior to the language of painting; because the strongest of our recollections relate to feelings, not to faces.*

p. 177. 3. *That the greatest strength of genius is shewn in describing the strongest passions: for the power of the imagination, in works of invention must be in proportion to the force of the natural impressions, which are the subject of them.*

[Keats put two crosses to this passage, and wrote the following note in the margin] "If we compare the Passions to different tons and hogsheads of wine in a vast cellar — thus it is — the poet by one cup should know the scope of any particular wine without getting intoxicated — this is the highest exertion of Power, and the next step is to paint from memory of gone self storm."

p. 177. That the circumstance which balances the *pleasure against the pain in tragedy is, that in proportion to the greatness of the evil, is our sense and desire of the opposite good excited; and that our sympathy with actual suffering is lost in the strong impulse given to our natural affections, and carried away with the swelling tide of passion*, that gushes from and relieves the heart.

## SHAKESPEARE'S GENIUS JUSTIFIED: BEING RESTORATIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF SEVEN HUNDRED PASSAGES IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS. BY Z. JACKSON.[1]

JOHN MAJOR. LONDON. 1819.

Z. Jackson seems to have been a particularly virulent type of the genus fool. In Macready's *Diaries*, there are two references to Jackson. In the first, Macready says: "A Mr. Zach. Jackson, with a play and a book on Shakespeare, called — one of those 'fools who rush in' to criticize, where modest knowledge shrinks from the sacredness of the temple." The second entry is as follows: "Mr. Z. Jackson called; one of the most adhesive and troublesome of all burrs or bores. I . . . had the pleasure of restoring to him an octavo volume of nonsense, which he calls corrections of Shakespeare's text."

Jackson's method is to quote a passage of Shakespeare and then alter it to suit a preconceived meaning of his own. His "explanations" are amusingly inept. In this book, Keats marked the passages which interested him with a cross only; underscorings, except in a single instance, are absent, and there are no marginal lines. There are, however, a number of brief notes, which I have indented and put between quotation marks. Italicized words are so in the text, inserted by Jackson. Only so much of the text is given as makes clear the meaning of Keats's notes.

On the title-page in Keats's handwriting is written: "W^m^ Haslam to John Keats."

p. 225. [From *King Henry V.* Act III, Scene II. Jackson quotes]

> DAUPHIN. That their hot blood may spin in English eyes,
> And *dout* them with superfluous courage.

[Jackson wishes "dout" changed to "and out."]

[Keats's cross is against the original quotation. His note is] "D'out, the same as d'on, d'off"

p. 243. [From *King Richard II.* Act III, Scene I. Jackson quotes]

> BUCKINGHAM. You are *too senseless-obstinate*, my lord,
> Too ceremonious and traditional:
> *Weight it* but with the grossness of this age,

[Jackson wishes this passage altered to]

> You are *to sense, less obstinate*, my lord:
> Too ceremonious and traditional
> *Weight, is* but with the grossness of this age:

[1] Author's Collection.

[Against this last passage, Keats wrote] "Can't be."

[Keats's cross is against the original quotation. His note is] "People were not so polite in those days — the first part of this passage explains the latter."

p. 250. [From *King Richard III.* Act V, Scene III. Jackson quotes]

K. RICHARD. Then he disdains to shine; for, by the book,
He should have *brav'd* the east an hour ago;

[Jackson alters "brav'd" to "brac'd."]

[Keats put crosses beside both the original quotation and Jackson's emendation. His note is] "perhaps gallows'd."

p. 251. [From *King Henry VIII.* Act I, Scene II. Jackson quotes]

BUCKINGHAM. I am the shadow of poor Buckingham;
Whose figure even this instant cloud puts on,
By dark'ning my clear sun.

[Keats has underlined "instant cloud," and put a cross against the passage. His note is] "Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish &c."

p. 256. [From *King Henry VIII.* Act III, Scene III. Jackson quotes]

MAN. When suddenly a file of boys behind them, *loose shot*,

[Against this, Keats has written] "good."

p. 265. [From *Troilus and Cressida.* Act IV, Scene II. Jackson quotes]

TROILUS. Sleep, *kill* those pretty eyes.

[Jackson suggests] Sleep, *still* those pretty eyes.

[Beside this, in the margin, Keats has written] "O the falterer!"

p. 313. [From *Antony and Cleopatra.* Act V, Scene II. Jackson quotes]

CLEOPATRA. —— his rear'd arm
*Crested* the world.

[Jackson continues] The Commentators, under the conviction that this passage is correct, suppose Antony's *reared arm* to be in allusion to the manner in which our kings have been accustomed to confer the order of knighthood. But, I am rather inclined to think the passage corrupt: for how his arm was to *crest* the world, is such an hyperbole, that it goes beyond figure.

It is true, that the entire of this speech displays figures the most exaggerated that human imagination can conceive; but to each, excepting this, there is some corresponding similarity with nature. But, here, the hyperbole is lost, for the world could bear no crest; nor are we to suppose that the honour of knighthood was conferred on all mankind. As I have already observed, then, that the passage is corrupt, reflection confirms the opinion. I believe our Author wrote:

—— His rear'd arm *clefted* the world.

Thus, following up the powers of strength proportioned to the Colossus, whose *legs bestrid the* ocean, when his rear'd arm sunk with force, he would *split* the world:

[Keats put a cross against the original quotation, and in the margin, running up the page beside this egregious passage, he has written] "Doltish — 'tis a glorious simile from Heraldry." [Here follows a drawing of a conventionalized heraldic arm, bent back and holding a sword.]

## PALMERIN OF ENGLAND [1]

BY FRANCISCO DE MORAES.

ANTHONY MUNDAY'S TRANSLATION, CORRECTED FROM THE ORIGINAL PORTUGUESE BY ROBERT SOUTHEY.

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME. LONDON. 1817.

This romance of chivalry was written in Portuguese about 1570. This copy of Southey's translation, in four volumes, has had a strange history. On the flyleaf of Vol. I is written in Leigh Hunt's handwriting: "The history of this copy of Palmerin of England is curious, and to us of the tribe of Hunt interesting. It was given to my eldest son when a child by my dear friend Keats; re-claimed among the books he left behind him in England by his bookseller owing to some undetermined arrangement; possessed afterwards by another friend and distinguished man, Hazlitt; and long after my return from Italy, found by me on a bookstall in Oxford Street, where I recognized Keats's marks and handwriting in the pages. All the marks in lead-pencil, enclosed by me (whether beside or under the print) in marks in ink, are his."

I cannot help thinking that Hunt's memory was playing him false when he said that Keats had given the book to Thornton Hunt. But in view of Taylor's letter to Keats just before he sailed, in which he charges a sum to the account of certain unspecified books delivered to Keats, it is possible that Keats looked upon the book as his. I do not believe this, however, precisely because the book is marked in pencil, Keats's habit being to mark his books with ink. Pencil marks could be rubbed out, which, if the volumes were borrowed, was an essential consideration. So convinced, or determined, was Hunt of the truth of his assertion that, on recovering the book, he wrote on the title-page: "Thornton Leigh Hunt, given him by John Keats, and restored to him after the lapse and accidents of many years by his loving father Leigh Hunt." Another thing which makes Hunt's statement as to the gift extremely problematical is that these volumes were among the books Keats left behind him on his departure for Italy. An unpublished letter from Brown to Taylor [2] makes this quite clear. The letter is dated "24th July 1821," and addressed to Hessey. Brown thanks Hessey for the loan of some books which he is returning, and adds: "They would not have been detained so long . . . had I known what books belonged to your house in Mr. Keats' trunk, as I wished to return them all together. The Ancient Drama and Palmerin of England I understand are your property, and therefore I can add those to the parcel."

Whether or not Hunt was mistaken as to the gift, I think there can be no doubt that he is correct in regard to the markings in the book. He probably

[1] In the possession of Lucius Wilmerding, Esq., of New York.
[2] Woodhouse Book. Morgan Collection.

saw the volumes many times during Keats's retention of them, and was perfectly familiar with their appearance. He may even have been present when some of the scorings were made. Keats seems to have kept the book for months; it was his habit with books borrowed from his publishers. A stronger reason to believe Hunt right in this particular, is the type of passage chosen for notice; no more sufficient evidence for the authorship of the pencil lines is needed.

Passages marked by John Keats and so certified by Leigh Hunt, occur especially in Vol. I; they are very numerous in that volume and are occasional in each of the three others. They are in a light stroke of his bad pencil. These strokes are vertical, in the margin along the passage indicated, and often quite irregularly straight, as if the page were held without full support and trembling beneath the pressure of the pencil. In addition, many phrases are marked instead by underscoring; and phrases within the already vertically marked passages are occasionally underscored also. In these cases, the pencil-stroke is not usually continuous beneath the word, but only a little part of each word is underlined. Often the strokes are very faint. In addition to reinforcing Keats's pencil lines with ink, Hunt generally wrote "Keats" at the bottom of those pages on which they occur. Other marginal lines in ink only, and without Hunt's direct attestation, were evidently not made by Keats. The passages so distinguished I have not reproduced.

In copying Keats's marked passages, I have printed the text of the book in italics, whether Keats marked it by a vertical marginal line or by underscoring. When a passage, or words within a passage, is double scored, I have indicated this double scoring by a line beneath the italicized text. Where it has been necessary to give parts of the text not marked by Keats, such parts are printed in ordinary type. In certain passages, I have paraphrased preceding or succeeding unmarked portions, and all such paraphrases, or interpolated words in marked passages where the sense as it stands is obscure, are enclosed in brackets. In a few cases, Hunt omitted to add his ink line to Keats's pencil mark, from inadvertence I suppose. As all the pencil strokes seem made by the same hand, I have included the passages to which they refer, but noted Hunt's omission.

## VOL. I.

p. 3 *Leaving the court, he* [Don Duardos] *walked with her* [his wife Florida] *into the forest, where the King his father had a royal palace; for that he supposed the sight of the spreading trees, and pleasant passages through the grassy groves, would be the occasion of the unminding of her former fits, and drive out of memory the sudden assaults that were incident to her feeble nature.*

p. 5 *. . . in a green meadow beside a brook, which with its clear running waters might have gladdened hearts not disposed to gladness.*

p. 8 *. . . a fair and clear river, . . . so clear that whosoever walked on its banks might count the white stones at the bottom.*

p. 9 [Of a tower in the middle of a river] *It was surrounded with tall poplars,*

*which rose so thickly from the bed of the river, that they well nigh hid the tower from any who should look through them.*

p. 43 . . . *wringing their hands, and pulling their bonnets over their eyes.*

p. 53 . . . *after he had considered honour and love, how the one was lasting in fame, and the other linked to an effeminate fancy.*

p. 57 [Pencil, two marks, not enclosed by Hunt] The thickness of the trees made his passage *more tenebrous than else it would have been.*

p. 63 *The sound of the waters was so loud and fearful that it dismayed all who heard, and the trees were dark and mournful, and the air filled with the rooks who had their nests upon them.*

p. 63–64 [Dido pictured slain] . . . the workmanship so cunningly ordered . . . *that you would have judged the fresh blood to drop from her fair body.*

p. 69 . . . *till the dark night overshadowed him, where he espied two shepherds making a little fire of sticks to warm them, because the night was exceeding cold.* [Keats's line here is exceedingly faint, but Hunt has marked it.]

p. 71 . . . *it is the nature of the heart to receive pleasure from those things which ought to give it, even though it knows them not.*

p. 77 . . . *her love, which he bought as dearly as she gave it daintily: for proof let suffice what hereafter ensueth. But attend a strange and rare event: on a sudden was arrived in the emperor's palace, a comely damsel mounted on a courser as white as a swan, bearing trappings of the same colour of fringed velvet, powdered with little roses of gold, which were set in such order as greatly to adorn the palfrey. She wore a French robe of new invention, made for travelling, bordered with rolls of gold, interwoven one with the other; her hair fastened with a thread of the same colour, and thrown back, and a chaplet of bright flowers upon her head, which diffused a singular perfume.*

p. 78 . . . the unanimity of thy friends to prosper in *longanimity* of high fortune. ["Longanimity" only is underlined, and against it Keats put an exclamation mark in the margin.]

p. 109 . . . *he taught Libusante to sit his horse faster.*

p. 109 . . . whose valour the one against the other was *no less cheerful to the beholders than delightful to themselves.*

p. 109 . . . *the steed of Onistaldo had one of his fore-legs broken.*

p. 110 [The weaker of the combatants] *bare dishonour forth of the field.*

p. 111 . . . every one was *driven into great admiration.*

p. 119 . . . (being of the *cast of the giants,*)

p. 121 . . . *wrongs toward women are not to be expected from you, whom nature hath so excellently gifted to redress them.*

p. 124 . . . *a damsel suddenly chanced into the galley.*

p. 132 . . . *night overcharging them with her uncomfortable hours.*

p. 153–154 *On the second day towards evening, being now far distant from Constantinople, he found himself in a valley full of thick trees, among which were certain old buildings in many parts fallen to ruin, yet in the little which appeared they gave sample of how noble a thing they had once been; within were galleries and apartments worthy to be inhabited, and without the walls were covered with ivy, so green and inwoven with the very stones, as not only to give adornment to the antiquity of the edifice, but also to preserve it from its total fall. About a stone's throw distant was a foun-*

*tain of clear water, in so pleasant a place, that he could not choose but alight.*

p. 155 *With this he paused awhile, weakness depriving him both of strength and breath to express the words which sorrow and love suggested. It was not long before he heard within the building the touch of a stringed instrument, which because it was somewhat distant he knew not presently what it might be; but anon the sound thereof coming under the trees, roused him, and going towards it he had not proceeded far within the building, before in one of the vaulted chambers he espied one sitting all in black, with a long beard, and a countenance shewing, by its sad complexion, that he had more mind to mourn than to any mirth; he was playing upon virginals of so loud a tone, that they could be heard in the field without; the harmony of which lingering in the hollows of the vaulted cieling, made so rare a sound that he who heard it was perforce led to listen, and to the forgetfulness of all other things. The knight of Fortune, transported at hearing him, leant against the door.*

p. 157 [The device upon his shield] *was a sepulchre in a sable field, death above guarding it.*

p. 157 . . . if I regret anything, it is that ought besides my own *sorrow should destroy me . . .*

p. 157 . . . *suffice it for the test of your truth, that you have been so ill able to maintain it.*

p. 158 . . . being so desirous of death, *that he would have given it to himself, if he had not thought that in so doing he should have sinned against that sorrowful remembrance from which he alway expected it.*

p. 161 . . . *a tomb of black marble, whereon the whole history of her life was inscribed, and upon the tomb Death was sculptured, as hideous as he is always pourtrayed. This rare piece of workmanship he laid in a chariot and led into the field.*

p. 165 . . . *That sorrow which is without hope hath no cure.*

p. 165–166 [A knight] . . . armed in arms of *red and white, with silver waves,* and bearing in his *shield a white bull in a grey field.*

p. 166 *The third gave his the spur, and met the knight of the Bull with such force that both were left on foot in the middle of the bridge; he who kept the pass held the reins fast, and sprang up again as lightly as though he had never lost his seat.*

p. 171 . . . fortune directed his course to the Sorrowful Valley where Paudricia abode in her house of sadness. *To this name all things were conformable; the trees dark and gloomy, the air damp and overshadowed, the waters of the river mournful both in colour and in sound; in one part where the river formed a dark, smooth, silent pool, there was a knight under some thick willow tree, of great stature, armed in plated mail of black and yellow, without other mixture; in his shield a white swan in a field sable;* he rode upon a grey horse.

p. 172 The knight of the Valley . . . *blew a horn which hung from one of the trees, which was heard afar, and it seemed as if the sorrowfulness of the place extended even to things inanimate; for the sound was more dolorous than delightful.*

p. 173–174 . . . the knight of the Swan accounting himself *well mated*, and the knight of the Savage Man *indifferently matched.*

p. 175 . . . *thinking that the best thing in misery is to have many who partake it.*

p. 184 The knight of Death on the next morning came forth before his tent, *attired in black armour, whereon was painted in divers places, the resemblance of a woman's face seen through shrubs, and in his shield was figured a knight of sorrowful aspect, surrounded by many deaths, who all fled from him; the whole so naturally pourtrayed, as moved the beholders to fear of those ugly anatomies, and compassion of the man. He sat upon a dark flame-coloured horse, leaning upon his lance.*

p. 185 *He came to the gate of the lists in arms of silver and grey, with silver doves so cunningly rivetted on, that the whole appeared one piece.*

p. 186 The knight of Death . . . in denying that *which was his right and title to have, smote down five other knights before he took food.*

p. 187 . . . a knight, *whose armour was beset all with green spheres, bearing in his shield likewise a sphere of the same colour; he rode upon a roan horse stained with blood, which made him look the fairer.*

p. 189 . . . *let not the lie of another be mighty enough to overpower this truth.*

p. 189 . . . they loose their swords, now so blunted that they could not cut with them, and grappled *body to body;* in which struggle their *wounds opened.*

p. 192 . . . *bear new arms of green and white, all beset with pelicans of gold, every one holding in their bills a heart as haughty as his own courage. His shield also was answerable thereto, bearing in the midst a golden pelican, upon a ground of sinople.* [After "sinople" Hunt has written "Red earth."]

p. 193 . . . *a knight mounted on a mulberry courser* and attired in *green armour, which was all hacked and hewed.*

p. 212 . . . in these thoughts, *sad one hour and sadder another*, he travelled on.

p. 229–230 *Do but remember, impatience brings sorrow, sorrow sickness, sickness consumption, consumption the miserable anatomy of himself, which is a terror to his kindred, an eyesore to his friends, and the continual heart-breaking of all that love him: on the other side, if a man apply himself to any exercise, as either travel for the honour of himself and fame of his country, or spending his time in martial exploits, or according as his estate is; the poor to take pains, the rich pain with pleasure, the artificer and such to their handy crafts, the noble mind and courtly gentleman either to the exploits of the field or such exercise as may avoid idleness; — then is the eye directed, the sense quickened, the mind preserved, the heart quieted, the conscience unpolluted, affection governed, love bridled, and lust banished; the good name perfected, virtue established, honour well exercised, and fame eternized. Think thus with thyself; while Altea lived I loved her, being dead I remember her, and in her love I live for her, as the honour I will enterprize shall witness.*

p. 248 . . . *the very spot where Polendos, King of Thessaly, had found him. The calmness and the beauty of that day then came into his mind, and the*

*fair galley in which he had glided along the coast, and the regular stroke of its oars.*

p. 251 . . . *after them, upon a huge mulberry coloured horse, a giant of bigness out of measure, armed in strong white armour, without any adornment soever. In his shield he bore three giants heads in a bloody field, being in memory of other three whom he had fought and slain in field, one to one.*

p. 253 [The sound of the wounded giant's voice] *echoed for a while in the hollow which the sea had worn in the rocks around.*

p. 253 [The fall of the giant's huge body] seemed like the *fall of a tower.*

p. 260–261 But the darkness soon became such, and the fear because of it which each felt lest he *should strike his companion, that perforce they left off battle, and all fell to the ground senseless, their memory and feelings being taken from them by enchantment. Presently the cloud opened, and the knight of Fortune saw them all four upon a bier, which was laid upon a chariot, and drawn by four black horses through the air.*

p. 289 . . . the report of noble deeds doth urge the minds of the courageous to be equal with those who bear most commendation of their approved valiency. *And this is the good fruit of imagination and of ancient histories.*

p. 319 . . . *he bore in his shield a starry sky. The armour of Vasiliardo was green, thick beset with lions of gold, bearing in his shield for his device an eagle with bloody talons. Francian had his armour resembling little flames of fire; in his shield likewise a fire in a field sable, so to the life that it seemed as if they were indeed flames, which yet did not burn him. Dridem was armed in black and yellow, with grey griffins thereon, bearing in his shield the tower of Babylon, drawn from the life in a field sanguine.*

p. 319 *Frisol had his armour red, with black joints.*

p. 320 . . . their armour white, and *golden fruit of the arbutus in a green field upon their shields.*

p. 320 . . . armour black, whereon was cunningly *bespread silver tears.*

p. 321 . . . armour green, whereon was figured many *golden poppies, and in his shield he bare Troy Town.*

p. 321 Goarim was in white armour, . . . bearing in his shield a peacock, *as beautifully blazoned as that bird is by nature.*

p. 321 . . . *their devices were all alike, which was the smoaky forge and anvil of god Vulcan the smith.*

p. 323 And as by this time the hurt which their swords could do was not *answerable to the will with which they wielded them,* they laid hands on each other.

p. 325 . . . *in the semblance of an aged man, upon a serpent huge and fearful to behold; and bearing in his hand a wand of fire, with which he touched them, and incontinently they all fell senseless to the ground.*

p. 343–344 . . . *night overtook him at the foot of a mountain hard by in a valley, whose freshness the darkness overshadowed and concealed; he espyed a little pavilion, wherein were lighted torches; this moved him to take his way thither, to see what it might be: as he drew nigh he perceived none within except a dead knight stretched upon a bier.*

p. 346 . . . *looking at him more wistfully, on a sudden his heart smote him, as if he knew the face.*

p. 372 . . . *when they had recovered they embraced each other over and over again, as though they had just met after long separation.*

p. 376 *The king was so joyful a man, that those grey hairs of his which had borne so many sorrows, seemed rather to belong to another, than to one who had endured so much.*

p. 391 *Thus between tears and pleasant talk, he passed this remembrance in his thoughts.*

p. 412 . . . *a mist on a sudden arose in the hall as that the lights were dim and ready to go out, the torches scarcely burned, one person could not see another, and the ladies being so dismayd caught hold every one of who was nearest her.*

p. 412 . . . a lion and a *tyger enduring a great fight together.*

p. 413 . . . *the hall seemed falling in ruins, and with the violence of that shock they fell to the ground, breathing from their mouths an horrible and ugly black smoke, with the which the air was left as dark as it was before.*

p. 416 *Flerida gazed upon her husband in such agitation as pleasure as well as pain occasions, when it comes suddenly.*

p. 417 The king, *whose age could not bear so great joy,* fell back upon his chair.

On the first page of the flyleaf at the end of the volume, continuing his note on the front flyleaf, Hunt has written: "And so are the words of reference on the other side of this leaf, and all others of like handwriting." The words on the other side of the leaf which Hunt attributes to Keats are as follows:

Chapter 6 The funeral image — The Castle of Sadness.
" 21 The Sorrowful Valley
" 23 The Battle of Four Knights

## VOL. II.

p. 128 *The ninth knight advanced, in grey arms with scallops of gold, and upon a mulberry-coloured horse, being of better countenance than those who had adventured before him.*

p. 129 *Presently the tenth advanced, in arms of red and carnation, with roses of silver rivetted upon them.*

p. 129–130 *He rode a spotted gray horse, with arms of gold and green in quarters, and among a thousand devices and galantries upon his shield, bore a lion in a field or,*[1] *tearing in pieces a white stag.*

p. 215 . . . *he came up and beheld a knight endeavouring to force her, and two others sitting by on horseback, laughing to see her defend herself.*

p. 235 . . . *many times they came so close as to dig at each other with the pummel of their swords.*

p. 235 So cruelly *martyred* the armour.

p. 362 . . . *there entered the hall a damsel large of body, clad in rich apparel, but little goodly; behind her three giants, of bigness out of measure, whose armour was of one colour and fashion, their bodies being covered with plates of steel, so huge and strong, that it seemed impossible for anything to demolish them; their helmets, which were carried by three men, were*

[1] This word is italicized in the text.

*made of a white bone surpassing smooth, and so hard that its strength was yet more to be admired than that of their arms; their faces, which were unarmed, nature had made so ugsome and terrible . . .*

p. 367 . . . a loud and fearful voice which *filled the hall.*

p. 370 *The giants Albuzarco and Albaroco, companions of Barrocante, refused to accept the battle; answering, that if there were no giants for them to deal withal, more knights should be given them, for one to one they would not enter the lists. But he of the Desert, who on such occasions was not wont to have much patience, took Albuzarco by the arm, saying, Thou mismade and overgrown thing . . .*

p. 371 *. . . calling for their helmets.*

p. 374 When they were placed in the lists, the judges *divided the sunshine between them.*

p. 374 As if the earth *were opening.*

p. 375 . . . came to the ground with the *saddles between their legs.*

p. 377 *. . . what is greatly desired is alway doubted.*

p. 379 Albaroco, *despairing of life, fought like one dead, thinking that sometimes the only remedy for life is to expect none.*

p. 380 *Would that I had here him who conquered Dramuziando and all the guardians of his castle, and would that here were with him four of the best knights on the earth, so losing my life on them,* I might the better brook my fortune.

p. 383 *I had rather owe you this love in death, than live and remain bound to you and dishonoured.*

p. 384 *. . . new reverses, overcoming all the power of fortune.*

## VOL. III.

p. 10 . . . he found himself in the midst of a little island, *enclosed round about with a water so black and deep, that it seemed as if it came from the centre of the earth. In the midst of this islet Palmerin espied an old withered tree, and underneath it stood a knight armed in his own lost armour, with his sword likewise in his hand, who said unto him . . .*

p. 14 At last, in one part where the waters made a *resting-place, he espied a boat, having four oars in it, which were handled and governed by four beasts of marvellous bigness, each one tied with a mighty chain, and at the poop sat a mighty lion, all imbrued in blood, as though he were master of the passage, who fed himself with nothing else but the flesh of his passengers.*

p. 15 *. . . his companions, the rowers.*

p. 17 *Being thus confounded, presently he saw an old and broken basket lowered down to him from the top of the rock, by a rope which was so weak and slender, that he thought the mere weight of the basket would have broken it.*

p. 18 . . . he got into the basket, and without seeing any one to hoist him, was raised into the air, but with *so slow and swaying a motion, that the delay doubled his fear. And now when he was at a great height, he saw that the basket began to break, and the cord give way with the weight, and untwist itself, so that at last nothing but a single thread was left, which was*

*almost invisibly small. Certes, though he had already suffered many fears, this was the worst of all, for he saw himself in the last extremity, being suspended in heaven by a single hair.*

p. 19 ... [The moon] *having no clouds to oppose or obscure her, began to rise in the East with a splendour which seemed almost unnaturally bright.*

p. 30 ... *the preparations seemed made to the end that there was no end to them.*

p. 101 ... *keep thy words for one who is afraid of thy deeds.*

p. 104 The *moon was up, and the battle could be seen distinctly; and the damsel seeing this great misfortune, gave herself up for lost: it being natural, when fear is at the height, that despair should accompany it, especially in women, whose courage is so little that their presence of mind fails in every thing, except in things of appetite; for then their sudden determinations are better than what the wisest man in the world could devise after long reflection.*

p. 104 ... the sword bit in [to the shield] so deep that it reached through to the handle; he let it fall, and Baleato *drew it to him, hanging on his sword.*

p. 121 ... *it was her wont to arise in the cool of the morning, that she might enjoy the early songs of the nightingale, and other birds.*

p. 124 *Some men in love commend their happiness,*
*their quiet, sweet, and delicate delight;*
*And I can boast of fortune's frowardness,*
*her extreme rigour, and severe despight.*
*But for the sweetness other men have felt,*
*I came too late, my part was elsewhere dealt.*

p. 235 ... *it is the nature of women to desire to see novelties, and go pilgrimages.*

p. 243 ... *a giant, of bigness out of all measure, covered with plates of black steel, which were of great strength. He carried a huge and heavy shield, which was bound with hoops of steel, exceeding strong; and bore in a field sable, some dark and gloomy trees.*

p. 243 ... the others were as *much sustained by the presence of the giant, as by their own force.*

p. 251 ... *they who rule by fear are flattered openly and abhorred in secret.*

p. 251 [Of the giantess] ... *her eyes always seemed bloody, and her lips were thick and rolled back, so that her teeth were seen.*

p. 253 ... *for he is wanted in the lists.*

p. 255 [The knights on their horses] ran their career with such a *thundering sound, as if the earth would have opened beneath them.*

p. 258 ... *they tried more to save themselves than to hurt their enemies.*

p. 259 ... Struck off his head and *shewed it to Colambar.*

p. 259 ... the giant *resented great pain, thinking that his sister held his death so certain, that she would not wait to see the issue of the battle.*

p. 259 ... [The knight of the Tyger knew] *whence his strength came.*

p. 260 ... *as if the giant had not deserved to have longer time bestowed upon him.*

p. 260 ... *till at length he fell upon the ground, and yielded up his soul to the devil.*

p. 283 [Of the branches of great trees] . . . *there was such a delicate shadow, and of such quality and nature, that in the hottest calm of summer they always moved with the wind.*

p. 284 [Of a rockery] . . . from the top there opened *pipes of water, which fell from stone to stone, and were so curiously devised, that the sound of the water upon the stones presented whatever harmony the nightingales and all other sweet birds make in the season when it is sweetest to listen to them.*

p. 284 [Of a crystal basin at the foot of a rock] . . . *the eyes were not more delighted with beholding it, than the understanding was confounded in devising how it had been wrought.*

p. 286–289 . . . the outer walls thereof were wrought with such subtle *gallantries in white and hard marble, that it would have seemed full difficult to execute the like in yielding wax. It had a lofty spire covered with tiles of many colours, so bright that the sight could not tarry long enough upon them to determine what they were; when they were eyed at distance, and so became more endurable, all that could be distinguished was, that one colour gave beauty to another, and that all were perpetually shifting their hues.*

p. 289 [Of a magical image of a giant] . . . as if he had been a living body *took him in his arms, and having thrown him down the two steps to the ground, returned again to his post.*

p. 289–290 . . . for an *image of gold* which stood over the doorway, and was made after the likeness of an old woman, clad in the manner of old times *called out to them both to do their duty.*

p. 291 . . . the *image* that stood above, in the presence of them all, *opened a little coffer* which she held in her lap.

p. 292 . . . sumptuous *shelves and desks of gold, and the desks being supported with birds and beasts of antique work, all of the same metal.*

p. 388 [Of the plight of the knight of the Damsels' and Florendos' horses after the combat] *His of the Damsels had his shoulder broken, that of Florendos burst open at the breast.* [Keats has put a question mark against this passage.]

p. 388 If you are dissatisfied that you have not *overthrown me at your pleasure, I might have had the same reason for discontent in regard to you, if I regarded nothing more than the desire of victory.*

p. 390 [A knight overhears another boasting that he is master of his affections, which words seemed to the listener] . . . *to come from one who was at liberty, and to whom love could do neither good nor evil. But he himself desired not to live in such liberty.*

p. 391 . . . *if I win her she will be mistress of me, but if she remain with you, I know not that she will be mistress of herself.*

p. 392 . . . *I do not hold her to be of such poor understanding as that for a man so free as you she should be willing to reject a will so devoted as mine.*

p. 399 [Two knights are apparently dead, Florendos questions the slayer, who replies:] . . . *this one who is still moving would have carried away the shield of the lady Miraguarda.*

## VOL. IV.

"Wm Hazlitt" is written on the flyleaf of this volume.

p. 91 *In this I know that I am asking much; but the faith and love with which I have ever served you emboldened me, and that faith is so proud of what it thinks it has merited, that it cannot be contented with any recompense given by another.*

p. 181 *And as men whose hearts have been long free, when they devote them at last are more devoted than such as have been used to such devotement, so it was with this knight.*

p. 181 . . . he had no other food there than his *own imaginations, which would sooner destroy than support him.*

p. 184 [A bull] ran at him, and *as he thought tost him with such force as to send him as high as the top of the rocks.*

p. 185 *. . . filled the place with loud and mighty cries, calling upon the statues to defend her against the intruder that was come to violate her palace. At this cry the images began to stir themselves, and to lay hold on their swords; but when the knight of the Savage Man made offer to defend himself, they stood silent in their former estate.*

p. 186 *. . . having with her four knights clad in costly armour, to whom she complained of him.*

p. 195 . . . *and this thought* [of putting on beautiful garments and showing herself to her friends in them] *made her long more to be among them, than the regret with which she remembered them, though that was great.*

p. 195 [Of vanity in women] . . . *so strong is this passion in them that nothing can equal it.*

p. 195 . . . more for the sake of appearing *better* than the other princesses, than of appearing *well.*

p. 255 [Of slashings in a lady's dress] . . . *these openings were in some places gathered up with golden twist, and set round with jewelry, and the whole was worked in tambour a full palm deep round about.*

p. 261 . . . he returned again to the lady *of whom he besought pardon for having failed in this third joust, and promised that the fourth should make amends. At this Albayzar could hardly contain himself, the pride with which the knight treated this matter provoking him as much as the overthrow of his own warriors.*

p. 262 . . . I am little pleased at not having overthrown you; *but the fault is in my horse; he is so sore laboured with travel, that he can hardly perform his duty.*

p. 264 *Now that I have accomplished the challenge on this lady's behalf, and am free from the conditions thereof, if you will grant licence to any more of your knights, and give me lances, I will joust here till night, or so long as my horse is able to hold out.*

p. 265 Making you yourself seek the payment, and *ask for vengeance upon yourself, which, in this request, you are full certain to meet with.*

p. 266 . . . *armed himself in armour of black polished steel, without any mixture; his helmet and shield were of the same fashion, and were, in the judgment of those knights, the best they had ever seen.*

p. 267 . . . the lance point glanced off again, and *entered the vizor of his*

*helmet, with such force as to wound him and make him fall back on his horse; and as he held the reins tight, the horse reared and fell back, falling upon him, whereby he was so sorely hurt, that he was borne senseless from the field.*

p. 269 *Then taking off his helmet he discovered himself, a gentle person, and flushed with what he had done.*

p. 282 *. . . a trumpet which Framustante blew.*

p. 285 *He followed her like one bereft of his understanding, and addressed himself to her in that state with words indicating his intentions, calling her Polinarda, whom he believed her to be.*

p. 287 *. . . at such times the heart divines its sorrows, and it seemeth that it forbodes evil with more certainty than good.*

p. 303 . . . the farewell was given with *so many tears, that there was neither room for words nor compliments; some, however, were shown to Armenia; for as they knew her not, and therefore had no friendship for her, there was neither love nor sorrow to take place of these forms.*

p. 319 [Of Framustante and the other seven giants] . . . *being of such huge stature that they far overtopped all others in the army, and their harnesses and helmets flashing over the field far away, as the sun shone on them.*

p. 323 . . . failing at their lances, met in such manner together with their *bodies, like two towers,* that both horses and men were sent to the ground.

p. 338 *Baroldo at length came to the place where his father lay slain; there he found Almourel: that true and loyal giant had lost his helmet, his hair was hanging loose about his bloody face, his eyes were full of tears, and tears and blood were streaming down his face together, and the whole countenance of the man was so terrible, that it struck fear into any one. He had taken his sword in both hands, and was fighting right valiently, and crying aloud for sorrow all the while.*

p. 349 . . . some died in consequence, *by reason that their wounds filled with wind, and their weakness waxing more . . .*

p. 360 *They marched into the field without voice or sound, silently, so that the very silence made them seem not to be earthly.*

p. 361 *. . . judging that they who came out to battle, so unlike living men, would fight like men that did not desire to continue such.*

p. 361 *. . . for like men who knew that defeat must betide them, they came mourning already for their own destruction: and since the gods had given them this day of vengeance, which had been so long withheld, he bade them now avail themselves of favourable fortune.*

p. 362 *What did the mourning with which the walls of Constantinople were hung signify, but that the city already gives itself up as yielded into the hands of its conquerors? And since it was in their hands to win all, or in their weakness to lose all . . .*

p. 371 . . . it was a pitiful sight to behold, how the women and children came *to look for protection among them, and how old men with grey heads and white beards, being so weak and feeble with age that they were fain to support themselves with their staves, desired that they might rather enter the battle, and there end their lives, than live to see this last succour perish, and then be miserably butchered with the women.*

p. 394 [After the combat, in which Framustante was killed by Dramuzi-

ando] Dramuziando was left in such plight, that not being able to support himself *he sate down upon the body of Framusante.*

p. 395 *Finding none near him to whom he could say these things, he began in his despair to display new strength, laying on such mortal strokes that in short time he had made much slaughter.*

p. 396 [Dramuziando's enemies] . . . threw spears at him from a distance, *as if he had been a bull.*

p. 396 *Having said this, such weakness came over him that he sate down again upon Framusante.*

p. 400 . . . *the roaring of the flame was heard afar off, and the crash of walls in their downfall, which had been built to stand forever, was terrible.*

p. 405 . . . *seeing as it were all the world dead,* he longed to bear them company.

p. 420 *Daliarte sailing with wind at will . . .*

## TITLES OF HONOR.[1]

By the late Famous and Learned Antiquary
John Selden of the Inner Temple, Esquire.
The Third Edition carefully Corrected. London. 1672.

On the title page, in Keats's handwriting: "John Keats. 1819."

On both sides of the flyleaf, Keats has begun what was evidently intended to be an index. An alphabet in double columns, with ample spaces between the letters, takes up the whole of both sides of the leaf, but there are only two entries. Under A. Keats has written: "Atheling Page 499"; and under R: "Reliefs Page 515."

Keats's marks in this volume consist, except for two underscorings, of marginal lines only, and there are no notes. Since there has been no necessity to add any more of the text to the passages marked, I have merely given these passages, without markings of any kind. Italicized words are so in the text, and have nothing to do with Keats.

p. 498. For in those times the affectation of making words out of that little Greek they had, was frequent here in *England.*

p. 515. [The beginning of this passage is in Anglo-Saxon, which is odd, as there is no reason to suppose that Keats could read Anglo-Saxon. It continues] That is *an* Earls *Relief is eight Horse, four saddled and four unsaddled, four Helms, four Coats of Mail, four Spears, as many Shields, four Swords, and* CC *Marks of Gold.*

p. 516. [Two pages here are wrongly numbered. This page is printed as 508.] The Bel-house may denote the Hall which was the place of ordinary diet and entertainment in the houses of Lords. It may well so signifie, if the *Saxons* used the like reason in imposing the name on the Lords Hall, as some say the *Italian, Spanish,* and *French* have done in

[1] Author's Collection

calling it *Tinello*, *Tinelo*, and *Tinel*, which in our Laws also is retein'd in *Tinel le roy*, for *the Kings' Hall*.

p. 525. Deo & beato *Æthelwoldo*.

p. 525. *Rex & omnes Regni Magnates ad Parliamentum tunc fuerant* (as *Brampton's* words are that relates it. And they *super hoc* (saith he) *consilio inter eos deliberato ipsum coram Rege pro gratia obtinenda secum duxerunt, sed statim cum Rex eum intuitus esset, de proditione & morte* Alfredi *fratris sui ipsum appellavit in hæc verba.* Proditor *Godwine*, Ego te appello de morte *Alfredi* fratris mei quem proditionalitèr occidisti. *Tum* Godwinus *excusando respondit*, Domine mi Rex salva reverentia & gratia vestra, pace, & dominatione, fratrem vestrum nunquam prodidi nec occidi; unde super hoc pono me in consideratione Curiæ vestræ. *Tunc dixit Rex, Clarissimi Domini* Comites & Barones *terræ* (where *Barones* denotes Thanes) *qui estis homines mei ligii modo hic congregati & appellum meum responsumque* Godwini *audiistis; Volo quod inter Nos in ista appellatioue rectum judicium decernatis & debitam Justitiam faciatis. Comitibus vero & Baronibus super hoc adinvicem tractantibus, quidam inter eos justo judicio faciendo diversimodo sentiebant. Alii enim dicebant, quod nunquam per Homagium, servitium, seu fidelitatem* Godwinus *Regi extitit alligatus & ideò Proditor suus non fuit, & quod ipsum etiam manibus suis non occiderat. Alii verò dixerunt quod Comes, nec Baro, nec aliquis Regi subditus bellum contra Regem in appellatione sua de lege potest vadiare, sed in toto ponere in misericordia sua & emendas sibi offerre competentes. Tunc* Leofricus *Consul* Cestriæ, *probus homo quoad Deum & Seculam, dixit; Comes, inquit* Godwinus, *post Regem est homo melioris parentelæ totius Angliæ & dedicere non potest quin per consilium suum* Alfredus *frater Regis interemptus fuit, unde pro me considero quod ipsemet & filius suus & nos omnes* XII *Comites qui amici & consanguinei sui sumus coram Rege humiliter procedamus onerati cum tanto auro & argento quantum inter brachia sua quilibet nostrum poterit bajulare, illud sibi pro suo transgressu offerendo & suppliciter deprecando. Et ipse malevolentiam suam rancorem & iram Comiti condonet, & acceptis homagio suo & fidelitate terras suas sibi integre restituat & retradat.*

p. 526. *Rex contradicere nolens quicquid judicaverunt...*

p. 536. [Of the charter which created Geoffrey of Mandeville Earl of Essex, which he appears to have received from both Queen Matilda and King Stephen. Selden says that he] was created, it seems by both as some others were.

# APPENDIX D

## FRAGMENT OF THE JOURNAL LETTER TO GEORGE AND GEORGIANA KEATS. FEBRUARY–MAY, 1819.[1]

On Monday evening, November tenth, of this current year (1924), there was sold as part of the collection of the late William Harris Arnold, the following fragment of the long journal letter from Keats to his brother George in America. This fragment has never before been published anywhere, to my knowledge, with the exception of a very small portion which was reproduced in the sale catalogue. In Buxton Forman's Complete Edition, after the entry in this letter of "Saturday 13 March" is an editorial note which reads as follows: "At this point there is a break in the manuscript arising from the fact that Keats overlooked a sheet when he despatched the budget to his brother and sister-in-law. Fortunately, however, some sort of transcript was made by Mr. Jeffrey, and from that the missing passage can be tolerably well restored. Keats ultimately discovered his omission, and sent the omitted sheet on with another batch, having first added an explanatory paragraph under a new date, as will be seen later on." What Buxton Forman printed as Mr. Jeffrey's transcript is entirely unlike this fragment, of which the only explanation seems to be either that this is not the part enclosed by Keats to George in his letter of the following September, or that the part I give was not kept with the rest. As Mr. Jeffrey's transcript has no fresh date and the new part has, and as the new part joins, with a little lapping, to that given two pages farther on by Buxton Forman, I believe that Mr. Jeffrey confused what George had originally received with the sheet which was afterwards sent, at the same time leaving out a large portion of the separated sheet by accident. That the letter was carelessly copied is proved by the date of the first entry which was also in the Arnold Collection. Mr. Jeffrey gave this date as February twenty-fourth, a date which I have already shown to be wrong.[2] In the holograph, it is very clearly written "Feby 14."

To read the letter as Keats originally wrote it, I am quite sure we should find no break where Buxton Forman has placed one, but should consider the two pages which immediately follow it as having been written on Saturday, March thirteenth, and put this new fragment where the September extract appears. The new fragment should then run to "this morning" where I have begun to quote in the text;[3] in fact "this morning" appears as the last two words on the recovered sheet. In the holograph, this fragment exactly fills both sides of a small octavo sheet of paper, and a number of such sheets might easily become misplaced, particularly as from the other fragment in the Arnold sale, which is in quarto, we see that Keats wrote this letter on sheets of varying sizes. Two large holes in the middle of the sheet have made some words conjectural, while some have disappeared entirely. What it has been possible to read is given here. Luckily most of the fragment is intact.

[1] Author's Collection. [2] See Vol. II, p. 181. Note. [3] Vol. II, p. 191.

"17th. Wednesday.
On Sunday I went to Davenport's where I dined — and had a nap. I cannot have a day annihilated in that manner — there is a great difference between an easy and an uneasy indolence. An indolent day fill'd with speculations even of an unpleasant colour is bearable and even pleasant doing when one's thoughts cannot find out anything better in the world; and experience has told us that locomotion is no change: but to have nothing to do, and to be surrounded with unpleasant human identities; who press upon one just enough to prevent one getting into a lazy position; and not enough to interest or rouse one; is a capital punishment of a capital crime: for is not giving up, through good nature, one's time to people who have no light and shade a capital crime? Yet what can I do? they have been very kind and attentive to me. I do not know what I did on monday — nothing — nothing — nothing. I wish this was anything extraordinary — Yesterday I went to town; I called on Mr. Abbey; he began again (he has done it frequently lately) [*torn*] that [*torn*]ing concern saying he wish you had hea[*torn*]ed to it: he wants to make me a H[atter] — I really believe 'tis all interested: for from the manner he spoke withal and the card he gave me I think he is concerned in [hatt]ing himself. He speaks well of Fanny's health. Hodgkinson is married — From this I think he takes a little Latitude. Mr. A. was waiting very impatiently for his return to the counting house — and meanwhile observed how strange it was that Hodgkinson should have been not able to walk two months ago and that now he should be married. — 'I do not,' says he 'think it will do him any good: I should not be surprised if he should die of a consumption in a year or [two]. I called at Taylor's, and found that he and Hilto[n] had set out to dine with me: so I followed them immediately back — I walk'd with them townwards again as far as Cambden Town and smoak'd home a segar — this morning I have been reading the 'False one.' I have been up to Mrs. Bentley's — shameful to say I was in bed at ten — I mean this morning. The Blackwood's review has committed themselves in a scandalous heresy — they have been putting up Hogg the ettrick shepherd against Burns — the senseless villains. I have not seen Reynolds Rice or any of our set lately. Reynolds is completely buried in the law: he is not only reconciled to it but hobbyhorses upon it. Blackwood wanted very much to see him — the scotch cannot manage by themselves at all — they want imagination — and that is why they are so fond of Hogg who has so little of it.
Friday 19th. Yesterday I got a black eye — the first time I took a Cr[icket] b[a]t. Brown who is always one's friend in a disaster [*torn*] tied a le[*torn*] the eyelid, and there is no infl[amm]ation this morning, though the ball hit me on the sight — 'twas a white ball — I am glad it was not a clout. This is the second black eye I have had since leaving school — during all my [scho]ol days I never had one at all — we must eat a peck before we die. This morning"

Clarke, in recollection, thinks that the encounter with the butcher took place about the time that Keats read the *Eve of St. Agnes* to him. But evidently what induced his belief was the remembrance of Keats's black eye.

The passage of time had left in Clarke's mind both the black eye and the fight, but the cricket ball had vanished entirely. It would seem, from what Keats says of there having been a previous black eye, as though the fight must have been an earlier occurrence. Probably, from the fact that George mentions it also, it should be attributed to some time before the Summer of 1818.

This letter makes Keats's chronic fatigue at this time very evident. Taylor's suggestion that Keats might take up the trade of hatter crops up again in the following Autumn.[1] The mention of the cigar is curious. This is the only mention of Keats having smoked throughout his entire correspondence.

[1] See Vol. II, p. 316.

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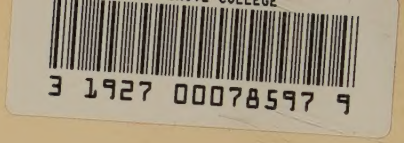
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